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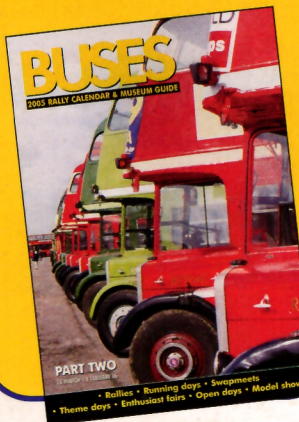


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**PART TWO OF
YOUR 2005
RALLY CALENDAR
& MUSEUM GUIDE**



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VOLUME 57 NO 601 APRIL 2005

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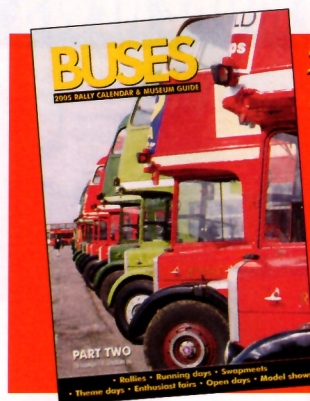
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MUSEUM GUIDE
— PART 2**
**16-page free
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supplement**



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THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

The result of Edinburgh's congestion charging referendum should be no great surprise. Turkeys, given the choice, seldom vote for Christmas and this clearly was no exception.

Asked if they favoured a £2 charge on motorists bringing their cars into the city centre at peak times, three quarters of voters said 'no'. They saw the charge not as a way of buying more bus priorities and a third tram line, but as an extra tax imposed by politicians they chose not to trust. And who among us offers to pay more tax than we can?

Not only did the council fail to overcome residents' and small businesses' objections, but it also scared off other potentially sympathetic politicians. Like the fellow Labour administrations of neighbouring councils and the supposedly pro-public transport Liberal Democrats on the city council. Idealistic principles melt away when votes are at stake.

So the congested, historic city most likely to follow London has admitted defeat and must look elsewhere for its public transport funds. All the signs are that the other British cities that might have implemented their own charging schemes will still follow Edinburgh's lead. By shying away from such a charge on their own patches.

What should we make of this?

Some — like the former Conservative MP-turned-newspaper columnist Matthew Parris — say it proves the folly of referendums and that Edinburgh should have implemented the charge and risked the outcome of the next council elections. David Begg of the Commission for Integrated Transport — like Matthew Parris a supporter of congestion charging — says much the same. He believes his home city should have done what the Swedish capital, Stockholm, is doing and delayed its referendum until the charge was in force for a year.

There is also the big question of trust. Many voters were reluctant to believe that their council would spend the money raised today on better public transport tomorrow. They might have felt better disposed to the charge if the bus and tram infrastructure was already in place. The government accepted as much when it published its White Paper on transport, as pre-congestion charge service enhancements are among the few circumstances in which it will allow some measure of bus re-regulation.

On the other hand, a government whose transport policy is apparently to save the planet without losing the motorists' vote isn't prepared to make itself less popular by proposing large-scale congestion charging schemes. That's why it left it to London Mayor Ken Livingstone and the likes of the City of Edinburgh Council.

What the vote must not be is an authority to do nothing. Congestion won't diminish without a serious attempt to tackle it by curbing inappropriate car use and creating a more acceptable public transport alternative. In the absence of massive public transport subsidies or hugely expensive and controversial new road schemes, congestion charging provided the mechanism to raise the necessary funds and make car commuters more aware of the cost of using scarce road space — and the relative cost of the public transport alternative.

We fear that the 'do nothing' option will be the politicians' choice, but await a more inspired outcome.

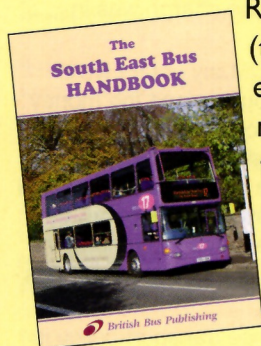
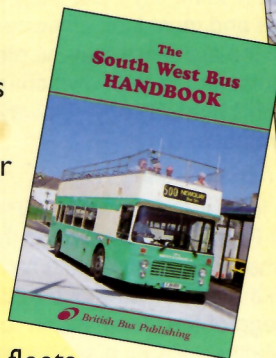
ALAN MILLAR

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WHERE NEXT FOR FUNDING AFTER EDINBURGH C-CHARGE 'NO' VOTE?

The chances of bus and tram services outside London being expanded by the introduction of congestion charging have been dealt a serious blow by a referendum in Edinburgh.

Residents of the Scottish capital — the first place outside London to propose a city-wide charge on motorists driving into the central area — voted decisively to reject the plan. In a postal ballot of 62% of the electorate, 74.4% voted to reject the proposed £2 daily charge, which was expected to raise £760 million over 20 years for investment in public transport projects.

Although Scottish Executive funding is already committed towards two of the new tram routes proposed for the city, the congestion charging revenue was intended to fund a third line through the southern side of Edinburgh and to fund further improvements in the city's bus services.

Council leader Donald Anderson conceded defeat immediately after the voting results were announced on 22 February. 'I accept the verdict. The people of Edinburgh have decided not to support the congestion charge and this will not now be introduced in the city. But we are committed as ever to further improving our city's transport.'

In his capacity as vice-chair of Bus Users UK (formerly the National Federation of Bus Users), bus journalist Gavin Booth commented: 'Traffic congestion will get worse and this will affect both

the businesses that opposed the charge and the ability of the bus companies to run a reliable service. The Edinburgh vote could well discourage other UK cities that are known to be examining congestion charging. The Edinburgh vote, sadly, means that the city has missed a golden opportunity to address its traffic problems, and the end result is that everyone will lose out.'

Besides the business community, the Labour-controlled city council's plan also was opposed by the neighbouring Labour-controlled councils of Fife, Midlothian and West Lothian, partly because the proposals exempted Edinburgh residents living outside the charging zone. Liberal Democrats on the city council also opposed it, although the party nationally supports road charges.

Transport secretary Alistair Darling — an Edinburgh MP — has indicated that, following the Edinburgh result, the government is unlikely now to achieve its target of having similar charging schemes in 20 cities and towns within the next five years. Bristol, York, Leeds, Southampton, Cardiff and Manchester were all believed to be waiting for the Edinburgh vote before deciding whether to go ahead with their plans for congestion charging.

York Council's executive member for transport, Ann Reid, says her council will look at other options. 'The Edinburgh result shows people



Above: Southampton is one of the cities where congestion charging was being considered before the Edinburgh vote. One of the city's two main operators, Solent Blue Line, has refurbished all-Leyland Olympian 731 (H731 DDL) for its recently launched Blue Star network. **DAVID JUKES**

are not yet willing to give up their right to drive wherever and whenever they want. We will be looking to see what other authorities do, but we feel there are lots of other ways of tackling congestion, such as better buses and more park-&-ride schemes.'

The vote also came as London Mayor Ken Livingstone plans to raise the central area congestion charge there from £5 to £8 a day from July and to extend the zone westwards.

Lothian Buses, meantime, began an expected series of trials with articulated buses in late-February when Volvo's Hispano Habit-bodied B7LA arrived from London for two weeks' evaluation. The company — owned by Edinburgh, East, West and Midlothian councils — is considering buying up to 20 artics for routes served currently by 12m single-deckers. Chief executive Neil Renilson suggests they could

also be 'a potential alternative to tram Line 3'.

'In light of the congestion charging referendum result, there is going to have to be the development of cost-effective means of offering improvements in public transport at an affordable cost in Edinburgh,' he told the city's *Evening News* newspaper. 'The articulated bus concept that we are trialling offers one potential way of delivering these improvements across a wide area of the city — with a particular emphasis on those areas that the trams will not serve. Bendibuses present a modern image with the presence and appeal that a traditional double-decker doesn't have.'

NEW LOOK FOR FLEET NEWS

In response to readers' requests that we improve the legibility of our widely read Fleet News sections, we have revamped this 18-page section of the magazine this month.

Although readers sometimes tell us that they think the print in Fleet News is smaller than it used to be, it actually has remained the same size since it first appeared in the magazine over 50 years ago. However, the new format provides the same amount of information in slightly larger type than before.

We hope to enlarge it again next month, but would be pleased to hear any comments you have about how this could be refined further. Please write, e-mail or phone the editor at the Glasgow address on page 2.

Below: FJ53 LZX, the Hispano Habit-bodied Volvo B7LA demonstrator, alongside and among Lothian double-deckers in Princes Street, Edinburgh in February. Lothian applied its harlequin vinyls on to the bus's London red livery. **GAVIN BOOTH**



STREETCAR TAKES TO THE STREETS OF YORK

FirstGroup's tram-styled prototype Wright StreetCar bus of the future went out on the streets of York on the first weekend of March, a few days before transport secretary Alistair Darling was due to officially unveil it at a high-profile indoor ceremony in London.

Although York remains the most likely location to get the first production StreetCars, it wasn't used in public service on 5 and 6 March. It was taken there to shoot a promotional film of the moving vehicle with actors and extras substituting for fare-paying passengers. The articulated bus made innumerable round trips between the recently opened Monks Cross park-&-ride site and a roundabout outside the city centre to enable the production crew to capture the features that First hopes will win new customers on to its services.

The 18.75m prototype is largely as First and Wrightbus described it last autumn when it first revealed drawings and outline details (*Buses* November). It is based on Volvo B7LA running units, with the front axle relocated under the driver's cab, and with the forward doorway directly behind as on the Optare Solo



Above: The prototype StreetCar leaving Monks Cross park-&-ride in York. Although it has Volvo running units, the only maker's badges are for Wrightbus.

midibus. Drivers are freed from fare collection duties and an electronic card reader is located in the bulkhead behind the cab.

A further major difference from conventional B7LAs is that the

auxiliaries for the nearside rear engine are relocated, allowing Wrightbus to do away with the characteristic 'shower cabinet' or 'toilet compartment' around the back seats and brighten up the area with all-round glazing.

The StreetCar is taller than conventional single-deckers, helping create an external appearance more like that of a modern tram. Inside, the combination of higher ceiling, taller windows and a mix of up-lighting and down-lighting also make it appear roomier. Wrightbus and First believe that a narrower bellows mechanism connecting the front and rear sections will help encourage passengers to use the full length of the vehicle.

First says the StreetCar has been designed following detailed research of passengers' opinions of modern bus design. That played a big part in the decision to move the front wheels out of the passenger circulation area. It has also determined a seating layout that provides generous legroom and personal space.

While First's conventional Wright-bodied B7LAs have 56 seats, the two-door StreetCar prototype has only 42, with some additional 'bum perches' near the forward doorway. It has two offside 'lounge areas' with side facing and corner seats in the rear section — one directly behind the bellows, the other towards the rear.

The prototype is in a pearlescent lilac and magenta livery, with large *f* vinyls incorporated in two windows towards the rear. A final livery has yet to be decided for the production buses, which form part of First's 'ftr' — text shorthand for 'future' — concept of a rapid transit system with everything but rails. It insists that StreetCars will only go into cities like York, where local authorities are prepared to match its investment with the road space on which they can be run punctually.

• Read our full report on the StreetCar launch in next month's *Buses*.



Above: The rear end takes its styling cues from the world of private cars.



Above: There are two sets of inward-facing seats in the rear section.

Below: The driver is isolated from passengers in a modern equivalent of a traditional halfcab



Arriva North West & Wales is offering to invest up to £45 million in over 400 new buses for its services in Merseyside, provided that local authorities and Merseytravel — the Merseyside PTE — can deliver infrastructure improvements.

In a move to counter Merseytravel's campaign to take control of the conurbation's bus services in a London-style quality contract regime, Arriva is proposing the creation of a Merseyside Bus Board to focus on the provision of better bus services. Rather than re-regulate buses, it wants Merseytravel to be given highway management powers similar to those enjoyed by Transport for London.

Arriva's investment in new buses would be concentrated initially on completing the Le bus-branded network of high frequency, low-floor routes in Liverpool. It currently has 147 buses on these routes and plans to invest £20 million by 2008 — when Liverpool is European Culture Capital — on another 168 to complete the conversion of the main corridors.

Provided additional bus priorities are created, it is prepared to invest a further £25 million by 2011 on providing low-floor buses on all of its other Merseyside routes. It operates around 800 buses in the region.

In return, it wants local authorities to take advantage of powers granted in the Transport Act 2000 to limit access to bus lanes and other new infrastructure to operators prepared to run high quality buses. It says it is also willing to make additional commitments about minimum levels of services that match the scale and radical nature of additional bus priority measures.

As a first step towards formalising a partnership, it says the bus board would bring together Arriva, other operators with a similar vision for the future, Merseytravel, city and borough councils, the police, passenger representatives and local strategic partnerships. 'It will offer an opportunity to identify and prioritise problems, to develop solutions and oversee their implementation,' it says. 'We want the board to be a forum for action, not a talking shop.'

Its key role would be to improve the punctuality of bus services and it acknowledges that the board in itself might not be sufficient, especially as PTEs do not currently have control of the road infrastructure in their areas.

'Arriva would support a transfer to Merseytravel of highway powers on the core bus network on Merseyside,' it says.

Arriva wants Merseytravel to do more to integrate supported and commercial services, partly by removing what it says is the confusion of supported services being allocated separate service numbers from their commercial counterparts. It also argues that

Below: A flashback to Liverpool in May 2000, as Alexander-bodied ex-MTL North Leyland Atlantean 1062 (A142 HLV) pulls out of Paradise Street bus station.

ALAN MILLAR



fares on supported and commercial services should be the same. 'We do not believe that subsidised services need to benefit from both a direct subsidy for their operation and a further subsidy from charging fares that are below the commercial level,' it says. 'That is a poor use of scarce public funds.'

The £45 million being offered by Arriva would build on the £40 million it has invested in 250 buses in Merseyside since it bought MTL North — or 'the ailing Merseybus' as it now describes it — in February 2000. 'We are now sharing our vision of how bus services could and should operate on Merseyside,' says Arriva North West & Wales managing director Bob Hind. 'Our proposals are an unprecedented commitment to working in partnership to deliver this success while maintaining an effective and sustainable network.'



Above: Arriva's high-frequency 'Le bus' network in Liverpool is already served by 147 low-floor buses including Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 2263 (X263 OBN).

ROBERT FRANKLIN

GROUP ORDERS 36 SCANIAS

In a break with recent practice, Arriva Passenger Services has ordered 36 Scania single-deckers — 19 Wright Solar-bodied L94UBs and 17 Polish-built OmniCity CN94UBs.

Recent Arriva single-deck orders have been for medium-weight VDL SB200s and heavy-

duty Volvo B7RLEs, although in its previous guise as Cowie, the group bought small numbers of Scanias for its Grey-Green fleet in London. British Bus, whose business formed the bulk of today's Arriva services outside London, also bought significant numbers of Scanias.

ACCESSIBLE COACHES FOR THE SHIRES

Arriva the Shires & Essex has ordered the group's first wheelchair accessible coaches for an unnamed 'flagship route'.

Later this year the company, which runs the Luton Airport-London Green Line express, expects five VDL SB4000+ coaches with low-entry independent front suspension module and high-floor Van Hool T9 Alicron coachwork. Arriva was one of the

target customers for the wheelchair-accessible Wright Commuter bus.

Bob McLeod, managing director of VDL Bus importer Arriva Bus & Coach says: 'We have been working with Van Hool for some time to develop a practical result that will suit the differing requirements of our customers and we are confident that this build solution will meet their expectations.'

HYLTON & DAWSON GIVES UP BUS ROUTE

Hylton & Dawson — one of a diminishing number of operators of Bedfords — is giving up its sole bus route into Leicester city centre after 29 April.

It began operating the service along the Groby Road in 1923 and had maintained it in its present form since 1984. All four of its buses are Bedfords with Plaxton Derwent bus bodies — three dual purpose ex-Tillingbourne 53-seat YMTs and one 47-seat ex-Heddingham YMQ. They will be sold after the service ceases, leaving the company with just three coaches — two Dennis Javelins and a Bedford — for school contracts and private hires.

The company says the route was still profitable, but it would have difficulty affording to buy replacement vehicles that comply

with the Disability Discrimination Act and would have seatbelts for schools work. It also cites the generally steep rise in insurance premiums.

'We are very sorry to have to cease this service after so many years,' says proprietor Adrian Hylton. 'There has been a long-term decline in passenger numbers, not least because of the loss of industry in Leicester city centre.'

Top right: Hylton & Dawson HDZ 101, one of the ex-Tillingbourne Bedford YMT/Plaxton Derwents, in Humberstone Gate, Leicester in April 2002.

Pictures by TONY WILSON

Bottom right: One of the more unusual Bedfords operated in relatively recent times, a short wheelbase Lex Maxeta-bodied YMQ/S, in Charles Street, Leicester in August 1997.



DUNN-LINE BIDS FOR MASS LINCOLN

Dunn-Line Group has told the Stock Exchange that it hopes to expand its contract work to Lincoln, and is in discussions with Anston-based MASS Engineering with a view to acquiring its Lincoln city operations.

Dunn-Line has applied for a licence for 35 vehicles based at MASS's George Street depot, which approximates roughly to the size of the MASS operations.

MASS expanded into Lincoln after Appleby's Coaches went into receivership in 2001, and operates a range of vehicles including Leyland Titan and former Hong Kong tri-axle double-deckers. Optare Solos, operated out of Newark, are also based there. Both companies declined to comment further as talks were continuing as we closed for press.

MASS finally pulled out of Grantham on 12 February (News last month) after the transfer of some of its business to Leicester-based Centrebus. Eight vehicles, staff and the Tollemache Road depot transferred to Centrebus, although not all of the former MASS services are being operated. Vehicles acquired by Centrebus include four Optare Excels (one ex Reliance, and three ex Trent Barton), two Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220 single-deckers, a Dennis Dart and an Optare Prisma-bodied Mercedes-Benz O405.

Centrebus is running commercial and secured services, and is in discussion with Lincolnshire County Council over routes requiring subsidy. Pulfrey's Coaches has picked up two services that Centrebus deemed uneconomic, and is operating double-deckers on the Barrowby Gate service.

Still in MASS colours but with Centrebus fleetnames, ex-Trent Barton Optare Excel S955 NRA on one of the replacement town services.

DALE TRINGHAM



TGM QUILTS SOUTH-EAST LONDON

Tellings-Golden Miller 450 (KX04 HRG), a Caetano Nimbus-bodied TransBus Dart, in Petts Wood in May last year while operating Orpington route R2.

MARK LYONS



Tellings-Golden Miller has sold its 16-vehicle Dartford bus operations to Go-Ahead-owned Metrobus.

The deal, which took effect on 5 March, resulted in the transfer of 50 employees, whose terms and conditions of employment are protected under the Transfer of Undertakings legislation. Operation of four Orpington-area London Buses routes and a Mobility Bus service were being transferred initially to Metrobus's temporary Polhill while its site at Green Street Green is redeveloped.

TGM expanded into the area in August 2003 when it bought the bus operations of Crystals, which was one of the first independent operators to win a tendered bus contract in 1985. TGM hoped that this would lead to expansion in south-east London, but this has not materialised.

It has since expanded in both of its established operating areas of west London and Essex; it is poised to buy back the AirLinks airside business at Heathrow and last year it acquired Arriva's Colchester network. It has also acquired Classic Coaches in north-east England from Status Group.



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FIRST TEMPOS ENTER SERVICE WITH TRENT BARTON

The first six production examples of Optare's new Tempo full-size single-decker have entered service on two upgraded corridor routes to the east of Nottingham.

Five of the 12m 42-seaters are in a green Best Impressions-designed livery for the Bingham-Nottingham service, which has been rebranded as Xprss. The sixth is in a gold Radcliffe Line livery, which also is worn by five-year-old refurbished Optare Solos.

Both services run four times an hour, with Radcliffe Line offering extra journeys to East Bridgford, Bingham and Cropwell Bishop. There also are additional services on both routes on Friday and Saturday nights and on Sundays, with buses now running until 03.00.

Trent Barton turned from its earlier allegiance to Optare — buying Solos and Excels — to buy Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UBs and expects another 28 Scania later in the year for its Sandiacre and Derwent Valley routes. But it required earlier delivery of these six buses and was happy to take the opportunity of evaluating the new Tempo.

Like Trent Barton's later Excels, the Tempo has the same 6.37litre Mercedes-Benz OM906LA engine as Mercedes' own Citaro, as well as an MAN 965L front axle. It has a Hungarian-built Raba A209 rear axle proven on late-model Excels for other operators. While Optare's standard automatic transmission on the new model is the ZF 6HP500 six-speed, Trent Barton has opted instead for the five-speed Allison T310R five-speed in its Excel 2s.

The interiors of the six buses have cantilever seating in corporate colours, silver handrails,



Above: The gold Tempo, Radcliffe Line-branded 306 (FD54 JYF) negotiates a sleet-soaked Nottingham city centre on 24 February. **SWANSWELL**

colour co-ordinated ticket machines and six-camera closed circuit television security systems.

Trent Barton chairman Brian King says the Tempos — which entered service in the worst weather that the East Midlands has seen this winter, will be evaluated before decisions are taken on future orders. 'We will need time to undertake objective research to determine how the new buses have been received by customers and drivers.'

Buses reader Richard Lomas sampled one of the Tempos on 25 February, the week they entered service. 'Inside it was bright and airy on a grey winter's day. The entrance area is much better than on either Trent Barton's or Nottingham City Transport's Scania with a much smaller wheelarch and good handrails. The buggy zone is neat with three side



Above: Interior of one of the Tempos, showing some of the features described by Richard Lomas. **OPTARE**

facing tip-up seats on either side and plenty of handrails.

'Towards the rear there are two steps in front of the axle [the Trent Barton Solars have one step] and a pair of side seats over the wheels. There are no rear facing

seats at the back. The floor is flat and the two steps each have a strip light on them, aircraft style.

'The ceiling is relatively high with concealed lighting similar to the later Excels. The ceiling panels run along the length of the bus with no hatches to work loose at the front. There is, however, a heater unit in the roof about halfway along the saloon. This was rather noisy on a cold morning but at least the bus was nice and warm. I don't know if this unit will blow cold air in summer. If so, I will forgive its noise,' he adds.

'My overall impression was of a straightforward unfussy interior design that will be appreciated by its users and was attracting favorable comments in an area where modern low-floor buses are taken for granted. Best of all, it didn't rattle. Well, not very much.'



Below: Rear view of green Xprss-liveried 501 (FD54 JXZ) in Bingham Market Place. **RICHARD LOMAS**

UNIVERSITYBUS REBRANDS AS UNO

Hot on the heels of Arriva's acquisition of Blazefield's Sovereign Bus & Coach business, the other major operator in central Hertfordshire — Universitybus — has rebranded itself as Uno.

The new name complements a new Best Impressions-designed pink and purple livery introduced in recent months for the 50-vehicle fleet, just over two thirds of which is low-floor. The Uno brand is also

being applied to a range of printed publicity and to a new website due to go live within the next few months.

The new name is intended to further distance the company from its roots as a trading division of the University of Hertfordshire. The university set up the company in 1992 to carry staff and students, but it has grown to become the second largest operator in the county after

Arriva and carries 2.5 million passengers a year.

After an initially difficult relationship with Sovereign, the two operators reached such a level of co-existence that they opened a shared new depot facility in Hatfield in 2002.

It also established professional bus credentials by appointing former Luton & District man Michael Finn as general manager and by securing the services of two large operators' commercial directors as non-executive directors.

Gordon Tennant of Metroline was its first and, following Metroline's sale to DelGro, Trent Barton's Ian Morgan succeeded him.

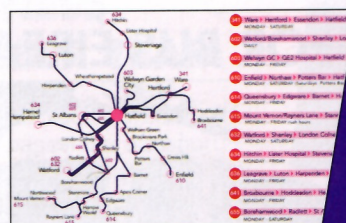
Since September 2003, former First Essex director Bill Hiron has been part-time managing director, a post he holds in addition to his continuing roles as bus director for Tellings-Golden Miller and owner of

Stephenson's of Essex and its Stansted-based Excel associate.

Explaining the Uno rebranding, Bill Hiron says: 'Independent market research carried out last summer showed that one third of bus users in the county did not know that our services were available to the general public. With the extensive network now operated, it was clear that we needed a new image to better reflect our position as a mainstream bus operator and we think the new identity is both eye-catching and bright.'



Above: Football commentator Bob Wilson — a University of Hertfordshire governor — joined students to help launch the Uno identity on Wright Crusader-bodied Dennis Dart SLF R653 VBM.



LAST LIFT-FREE BEAVERS FOR WESTERN GREYHOUND

Delivery of three more Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios makes Western Greyhound the largest operator of this endangered species outside the big groups.

The Cornish operator now has 36 Beavers in its 50-vehicle fleet and the latest three — for a doubled frequency on its Truro-St Columb Major route — are the last non-Disability Discrimination Act compliant examples to be built at Scarborough. To meet future demand, Plaxton will fit a wheelchair lift in the nearside rear overhang.

Repeating a message he aired in *Buses* when we profiled the company two years ago, managing director Mark Howarth says: 'We run a highly standardised fleet. The Beaver has proved the ideal bus for our routes, most of which use narrow country lanes that bigger buses simply cannot negotiate. Standardisation makes life easier for our workshops and our drivers, and the Beavers have proved to be reliable and cost-effective.'

One of Western Greyhounds new Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814s for its booming service 592. The numberplate is a false one applied for this publicity photograph. **PLAXTON**



READING LAUNCHES SOLAR FLEET

Reading Transport implemented the second phase of its relaunch on 7 March when its first 12 Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UBs entered service on quality routes serving the south of the town. Eleven are in a new deep green and beige version of the council-owned company's new livery. A third phase will see another eight Solars arrive in June.

Picture by
MARK LYONS



IN BUSES NEXT MONTH

On sale 15 April

■ **Going places fast:**
Cardiff Bus in profile
■ **First's StreetCar**
in detail

■ **We report from the Cobham bus gathering**
■ **And read all the latest news and Fleet News**



Picture by **MARK LYONS**

ENVIRO200H DELAYS PROMPT FIRST ELECTROCITY ORDER

Delays in developing Alexander Dennis's diesel-electric Enviro200H hybrid midibus have prompted Go-Ahead to order the Wright Group's rival Electrocitcity.

When TransBus International unveiled its prototype Cummins ISBe-engined Enviro200H in October 2003, Go-Ahead's London Central confirmed plans to buy 12 last summer for route 360 through the heart of London. The TransBus collapse delayed them and now the hybrid version is unlikely to be ready before 2006.

Instead, it is taking six VDL SB120-based Electrocitcity midis, the first ordered since Wright announced the model three years ago, to run alongside conventional diesel Darts. They are required by the summer, so will have the

'classical style' body of the two Electrocitcity prototypes. Wright intends to adapt its 'millennium' family of Solar and Eclipse bodies for the next generation of Electrocitcity.

While batteries on the prototypes are charged by a similar Capstone micro-turbine to that on Stagecoach's New Zealand-built Designline Olymbuses for Tyneside, the London buses will use an as-yet-unnamed European 1.9litre Euro4-specification common rail diesel engine. Volkswagen and Renault both offer cars with 1.9litre Euro4 diesels and Fiat has a Euro3 diesel of this capacity. East Lancs is understood to be using the Volkswagen engine in its projected hybrid bus.

■ see In London, p18



Above: Wright Electrocitcity prototype AKZ 7122 on trial with First York last May. It is based on a Crusader-bodied Dennis Dart that Wright first converted for battery electric propulsion. Like the production models, the other prototype has a Cadet body on a bare VDL SB120 chassis.

ANDY IZATT

IRIZAR PBs FOR BUS ÉIREANN

Another new type introduced into Bus Éireann's already varied coach fleet is the Irizar PB-bodied Scania K114. The first of 30 arrived in late-February. Eighteen (including SP5 pictured here) are 51-seat tourers for CIE Tours International.

Picture by
DARREN HALL



DIARY DATES

29 March

Omnibus Society. Philip Kirk, Oxford Bus Company. 18.45 London Underground headquarters, 55 Broadway, London, SW1 (St James's Park station)

8/9 April

Tbus Expo 2005. Trolleybus conference and exhibition, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley. Fee £70, Details: John Fuller, 01474 352400. E-mail: tbusconference@yahoo.co.uk

26 April

Conference, Delivering Essential Transport in the Growth Areas. Crowne Plaza London St James Hotel. Details: Waterfront Conference Company 020 7787 1210, www.thewaterfront.co.uk

26 April

Omnibus Society. Roger Davies on the Glory Days of Ribble. 18.45 London Underground headquarters, 55 Broadway, London, SW1 (St James's Park station).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Blackburn Transport, the council-owned bus company, has been awarded £100,000 compensation in the High Court from Suzanne and David Bailey, whose Catch-me-bus.com business also traded as Blackburn Transport Ltd. The Baileys also face 36 charges of fraud.

2 Travel Group has retained its operator licence. The Transport Tribunal has reversed a traffic commissioner's ruling that the O-licence be revoked.

First Bristol has been fined £96,250 for poor service reliability last summer. Senior traffic commissioner Philip Brown says the company was only 80 to 85% to blame and has urged local authorities to do more to help buses cope with congestion.

Centro is removing side advertising panels from its bus shelters in the West Midlands, to give passengers a better view. In future, advertising will only be carried on the rears of shelters.

CITARO MODEL WINNERS

The winners of the five Creative Master Northcord diecast models of an articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro diecast model in our February competition were C. A. Beale of Bristol, P. Jones of Coventry, Derrick Kershaw of Todmorden, Alan Rice of Dorchester and Stephen Walker of Rowley Regis.

Congratulations to all five of you and to all who knew that the correct answers were that London's first Citaro artic was employed on Red Arrow services, that the well-known phrase associated with the London examples last year was 'there's no smoke without fire' and that the Citaro is built in Germany.

Northcord expects these models to reach the UK in June. We will send the prizes off as soon as we receive them.

■ Autographed model competition, p30

LONDON NARROWS ITS SOLO OPTIONS

First London replaced the Marshall bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios on route W12 (Wanstead-Walthamstow) from 5 March with six SlimLine Optare Solos, the first in London service. To conform to Transport for London's 100% red

livery requirement, the sextet — which includes OOS53702 (LK05 DXP) in Snaresbrook Road, Wanstead on the edge of Epping Forest — have no willow-leaf patterns on their sides.

Picture by MARK LYONS



BUS OPPORTUNITIES WITH BUS PEOPLE

MIKE MITCHELL BECOMES RAIL DIRECTOR GENERAL

FirstGroup's business development officer, **Dr Mike Mitchell**, is leaving the group on 1 May to become director general of railways at the Department for Transport. He has been with First since its formation in 1995 and joined one of its predecessors, GRT Bus Group, when it acquired management-owned SMT in September 1994.

A 56-year-old Aberdonian, he joined Eastern Scottish, as SMT was then known, in 1986 after 16 years with British Rail and as its commercial director was part of the management/employee team that bought the company from the Scottish Bus Group four years later. He became managing director at First Aberdeen and later at First Manchester and became director of its UK Rail division in 1998. In 2001, he became First's UK chief operating officer overseeing bus and rail businesses, before stepping into his current role when the group restructured last year.

In his new post, he will be responsible for letting contracts for train franchises and for securing improved performance and value for money on the rail network.

In his spare time, he is actively involved in bus preservation projects.

JUFFS BACK AS TORRANCE QUILTS FIRST EDINBURGH

Former Stagecoach UK Bus engineering director **Brian Juffs** has returned to day-to-day bus operational management as the latest managing director of First's Scotland East business. After leaving Stagecoach, he became managing director of Deans Powered Doors, one of the major equipment suppliers to the bus manufacturing industry.

He took on the Edinburgh-based job at the beginning of March, following the resignation of **Graeme Torrance**, who had been in post for almost three years and held senior management posts with three of the big groups serving Scotland. Graeme Torrance was managing director at Stagecoach West Scotland for five years and for two years before that was MD at Clydeside Buses, which subsequently became Arriva Scotland West. Before returning to Scotland to take up that post, he was MD at Southend Transport in British Bus days.

Another high profile departure from First is of **Russell Gard**, operations director at First Manchester. He joined the company six years ago from Travel West Midlands.

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MAGRATH TO HEAD LTP GROUP IN W MIDLANDS

Tom Magrath, projects director for Centro (the West Midlands PTE), has been appointed chairman of the West Midlands Chief Engineers' and Planning Officers' Group (CEPOG). The group is charged with delivering the local transport plan on behalf Centro and seven district councils of the West Midlands. He succeeds **David Bull** of Birmingham City Council. CEPOG is made up of senior officers from Centro, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton city councils and the metropolitan boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall.

GOSKILLS EXPANDS BUSINESS ADVISER TEAM

GoSkills, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for passenger transport, now has a full complement of Business Advisers with the addition of

Helen Smith to its team. She takes on the responsibility for providing strategic support to businesses in the south east region on skills and training issues. Before joining GoSkills, she worked with the Learning & Skills Council in London and south east England as a senior workforce development adviser.



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ENVIRO500s TO REPLACE EX-LONDON RTs?

A small Californian operator is considering buying British-built Alexander Dennis Enviro500 double-deckers ultimately to replace its much-rebuilt former London Transport RTs.

Unitrans, a university bus operator in Davis, California, is currently in the market for two new buses to replace a pair of recently withdrawn ex-West Riding Daimler Fleetlines. In the longer term, it is considering the replacement of its five RTs and one RTL, which have been converted to run with gas-fuelled engines.

With that in mind, it arranged with Alexander Dennis that a North American-specification Enviro500 would be sent to Davis for the undertaking to have a look at what is on offer. In the event, not one but two arrived there in January. These were buses 9042 and 9046 in a batch of nine destined for BC Transit's Victoria Regional Transit System on Vancouver Island, Canada. Rather than being shipped direct to Canada's western coast, they



The two Enviro500s at Davis, with compressed natural gas-engined ex-London RT2819 in the background.
Picture and report by MICHAEL DRYHURST

were driven overland through the United States to help raise transit agencies' interest in double-deckers.

BC Transit already has 38 Alexander-bodied three-axle Dennis Tridents in its fleet, but these are its first Enviro500s.

After being subjected to intense scrutiny and approval by Unitrans

staff, the two buses toured the Unitrans double-deck routes, turning many a head in the process. While the Enviro500 is powered by the Cummins ISM 300PS engine, which Alexander Dennis proclaims 'is certified to meet EPA (US) emission standards, the toughest in the world', California actually has the

toughest emission standards of all. That may yet frustrate Unitrans's requirement for new double-deckers as Californian legislation will ban diesel engines in new heavy vehicles, to be superseded by cleaner, hybrid power. The Unitrans search is on for such a unit that can be adapted into the Enviro500.

LAS VEGAS PREPARES FOR SEPTEMBER LAUNCH

The Regional Transport Commission of Southern Nevada plans to put the first of its 50 British-built Alexander Dennis Enviro500 double-deckers into service in September.

The first of the buses has already been built at the manufacturer's body plant in Falkirk, where it was inspected in February by a delegation of RTC

representatives, including chief executive officer June De Voll.



She says: 'These vehicles will have to operate in extreme weather conditions. In the summer, for instance, the temperature in Las Vegas often soars to over 110°F and that puts enormous demands on the cool down systems. We're delighted with what we've seen. They will

bring a new dimension to transit operations in Las Vegas.'

The Enviro500s will replace articulated single-deckers on the Las Vegas Strip. The first of the buses are to be shipped to the US in the summer, ready for extensive driver training to be undertaken.

NOVABUS GOES SUBURBAN

NovaBUS — Volvo's Canadian bus-building subsidiary — has added a fully-seated single-door suburban bus to its range. Based on the full low-floor LFS model sold to city transit authorities, it has a stepped floor ahead of the rear axle.



KMB orders more Wright Volvos

Kowloon Motor Bus has placed another repeat order for 25 Wright-bodied Volvo double-deckers.

The 80-seaters will be built on Volvo's new B9TL tri-axle chassis with 300hp 9litre Euro3 engines, similar to a prototype built last year. They follow earlier orders for 101 Wright-bodied Volvo B10TL Super Olympians and are among relatively few new buses going into Hong Kong fleets at present. Wright's unnamed Hong Kong body is based on the Gemini model built for the UK.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER BUS SALES UP

DaimlerChrysler boosted bus and coach sales by 16% last year, selling 32,800 chassis and complete vehicles. Turnover was up 12% per cent to Euro3.7 billion, says Willi Diez, head of the company's bus division in Stuttgart.

Expressing cautious optimism for 2005, he says demand is, however, unlikely to increase this year. Bearing in mind the strong Euro and rising price of raw

materials, the target is to maintain sales at the current level.

Business in Latin America is particularly buoyant. Sales rose by 24% (13,800 units). Western Europe saw an 11% boost (8,700 buses and chassis). In the currently sluggish North American market, sales of Thomas and Orion products went up by 9% (5,490). The number of staff employed worldwide increased by 700 to 17,500; of those, 8,000

work at the German plants in Mannheim and Ulm.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of EvoBus, formed in 1995 when the then ailing Mercedes-Benz bus division was merged with Karl Kässbohrer of Ulm. The Setra and Mercedes marques currently have a market share in Europe of 28.5%, the company reports. The delivery of around 8,600 Setra and Mercedes-badged coaches last year represents an increase of more than 50% compared to 1995.

NEW US CITY GOES IT ALONE

Elk Grove, one of three adjacent Californian areas to achieve city status, has set up its own locally controlled bus service.

Along with Citrus Heights and Rancho Cordova — also in Sacramento County — it had achieved the levels of population and sales tax revenue that deem it capable of supporting city services and infrastructure. But while the other two reached agreement with Sacramento Regional Transit to continue to provide bus and light rail services, Elk Grove believed it could save money by cancelling its contract. Instead, it entered into an agreement with MV Transportation of Fairfield to provide a dedicated bus service.

MV is best known for providing minibus services for disabled and elderly people. For this contract, it purchased seventeen 14-year-old Gillig

Phantom 40ft buses from AC Transit in Oakland — where new Belgian-built Van Hools have recently been delivered. It had them thoroughly refurbished and converted from diesel to hybrid electric drive, using petrol engines. It was intended that the interior refurbishment would include satellite television and Internet access.

Recent reports in the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper

suggest that all is not well with the fledgling transit system. They cite missed journeys, routes and stops, buses leaking rainwater over the customers, rear exit doors that don't function.

All of this was summed up by an Elk Grove spokesman, who said: 'You are taking new technology, all-new routes and an entirely new transit system. It's unrealistic to expect that we are going to open the doors on Day One and not have any glitches.'

Elk Grove E-tran Gillig 109 in downtown Sacramento. The onlookers are studying the hybrid electric drive. MICHAEL DRYHURST



NZ OPERATORS SNAP UP EXCELS

Two New Zealand operators have purchased 36 Cummins-engined Optare Excels from UK operators Trent Barton and Reading Transport, with options to take others as they become available.

Christchurch Bus Services — operating on the South Island — is taking 16 of Trent Barton's 11.5m Excels, while North Island operator Ritchie's Transport Holdings, of Swanson, Auckland, is taking 20 from Reading, including five new to Cardiff Bus.

CBS has won contracts previously held by council-owned Red Bus and by June will operate five routes in the city. The Excels will increase its fleet strength to 43. Ritchie's, which also has a dealership business, may convert its buses to two-door layout.

It is reported that the operators were unable to source sufficient new low-floor buses in time before the summer, not least because leading bodybuilder Designline is halfway through a Stagecoach order for nearly 100 MANs. Axle weight limits also increase the attractiveness of lighter products like the Excel.

While some British operators consider the Cummins-powered

Excel to be underpowered, this is less of an issue in these urban areas of New Zealand.

Below: While the smaller operators are buying secondhand Excels from the UK, Stagecoach is buying new MANs. Four new Designline-bodied MAN 17.223s for its Auckland subsidiary are in this purple livery for the Remuera Rider route to an eastern suburb. The bus pictured here, however, is a Fairfax Industries-bodied MAN 16.230 new in 2000. DON ROBERTS



GERMAN EXPERTS WANT AIRCRAFT-STYLE FIRE REGS

Germany's private vehicle testing authority, Dekra, is urging tough new legislation to protect coach passengers from the effects of toxic fumes emitted when a vehicle catches fire.

An examination of 55 serious coach blazes from 1999 to 2003 highlighted the poisonous vapours from the flammable plastics and fabrics used in interiors as the biggest danger.

The rapid spread of smoke inside vehicles caused confusion and even panic, say its experts. Passengers already in safety sometimes re-boarded smoke-filled vehicles to search for luggage while, in some cases, drivers were unable to operate extinguishers properly.

Stuttgart-based Dekra wants to see compulsory automatic smoke detectors in the engine bay, where according to the survey, the majority of the fires (76%) broke out. It also calls for a total ban on passenger smoking.

In line with airline practice, drivers would be obliged to brief passengers before each journey on safety precautions on board, including where to find the emergency exits.

CONNEX BUYS NEW FOR ISRAEL

Connex has bought its first 10 new coaches for its operations in Israel. Until recently, it used secondhand vehicles from a variety of sources, but it has added four MAN 18.360s and six Volvo B12Bs with Volvo's I-Shift gearbox. Both types have Israeli bodywork, by Barak on the MANs and Merkavim on the Volvos.

Picture by JACKY BAR-LEV





Did UK operators commit a fundamental error in handling the replacement of bus conductors?

After just one column each from your new Inside Trackers, we already have some common ground and a new scientific formula, it seems. $AB+BC=607$.

Isn't it a small world? I might unwittingly have met my fellow *Buses* contributor when we were both in short trousers, somewhere around Hayes End turning circle. If I had the time to dig through the output of my Box Brownie [does that need explaining, Mr Editor?] there might just be a picture of a 607 trolleybus with young BC looking lovingly at it. Ah well, as he says, us oldies can so easily regress to childhood.

I left you last time (Inside Track, February) at the point in my career where I had jumped ship from London Transport and joined the Bristol Omnibus Company at its magnificent headquarters building at St Augustine's Place, in what was once the Tramways Centre in that fine city. My first job — I think while the company's management found out if I was any good at anything — was in the traffic administration office. Well, who can blame them given that they might have had sight of one of my more (in)famous end-of-term school reports in which no less a person than the headmaster said: 'Andrew sets a very low standard for himself and then completely fails to achieve it.' Yes, that did take a bit of explaining at home.

Root-and-branch review

After a while I was put to work with the soon-to-retire schedules officer for Bristol City Services (or BJS as it was known — for Bristol Joint Services, in which the city council and BOC shared a 50/50 interest) to

carry out a root-and-branch review of the network and recommend changes to improve reliability and reduce cost.

The latter had become vital given the significant inroads made into bus ridership all over the UK following the first flushes of our love affair with the car, the advent of television and all the other societal changes of the 1950s and 1960s. We put together a large report in an orange folder with lots of maps (drawn by yours truly, in view of the technical drawing skills picked up on my surveying course) which set out some radical ideas for route re-organisation and significant on-street priority for buses in the city centre. It was too revolutionary at the time, but I'm pleased to say that quite a few of the ideas were pursued in subsequent years.

From that, I went on to work for a few months with the divisional traffic superintendent for Bristol City Services (didn't bus companies have fascinating job titles in those days?). I got stuck in at the sharp end of an operation employing around 600 buses in about the sixth biggest city in the country. It certainly was the largest to feature 'company' rather than municipal operation.

At the time (early 1969), there were huge problems with staff shortages and more than a few difficulties with vehicle availability too, though these tended to be masked by the former. It was not unusual to have anything up to 100 buses parked up around the city centre and in the depots for lack of staff. The evening peak periods were absolute hell because by then the chances of marrying up pieces of driver and conductor duty to crew half a late turn had all but evaporated.

Bristol City Services — in common with many similar operations — was living proof of perhaps the greatest problem public transport has so far faced. Two members of staff per vehicle were no longer affordable and modern labour markets were not going to produce them given the post-war shift to nine-to-five work with no anti-social evenings and weekends into the bargain.

There was plainly no choice. A rapid conversion to what we then called 'one-man-operation' was called for. Indeed, it had already begun on country services and one Bristol City route which, owing to a low bridge, required single-deckers. Can you believe that these were crash-gearbox Bristol/ECW MWs with manual Setright ticket machines? The company's management at the time decided to convert from crew-operated KSW, LD and FLF double-deckers to RE single-deckers with two doors. The concept was right, but the ECW-bodied Bristol RE might not have been its perfect interpretation.

Wrong job for a driver?

There was, however, a fundamental mistake made — and not just in Bristol but all over the UK, including London — in the style of 'omo' introduced. Put simply, the British approach was to retain graduated fares with tickets sold (virtually) only on the bus and to give the conductor's job to the driver. In continental Europe, the same problem of affordability and availability of staff was being faced (though with a less drastic reduction in passenger numbers for reasons I will return to later) but it was decided to give the conductor's job to the passengers.

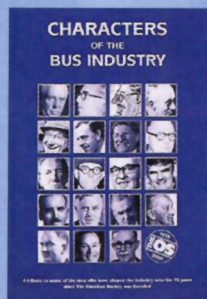
Next month, I will look at how this was done and consider how the effective slowing-down of UK urban bus services by 25% or more was to damage the industry significantly. Oh, and by the way, still no mention of the Routemaster...

Long queues of passengers waiting to pay cash fares from drivers equipped at best with electric ticket machines became the norm after large-scale one-person operation was introduced in the 1970s. While Andrew Braddock writes of the situation in Bristol, this is another National Bus Company subsidiary — Southern Vectis — in September 1981 with holidaymakers (and their luggage) squeezing into Bristol VR 638 (NDL 638M).



IAN ALLAN BOOKSHOPS

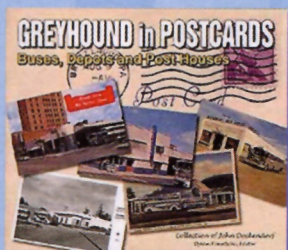
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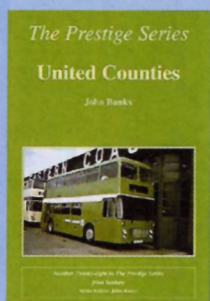
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It may not be Spring yet, but there is plenty to catch up on and to look forward to

- **London Bus Magazine** (no. 130) includes articles entitled 100 years of London's Oldest motor Bus Service - Route 12 Peckham - Oxford Circus, The Alternative Forties (looking at other routes numbered 40) and London Bus Garages - Then and Now - Forest Gate as well as the usual Around & About quarterly review. £5.00 (£4.00 to members).



- **TLB Extra 1976** - TLB style vehicle news for this the year when most MDs were delivered to London Transport and the first Leyland Titan prototype entered service, SNCs and SNBs were delivered to London Country but many vehicles were hired as well; 72 pages, with illustrations - £5.50 (£4.50 to members).



- For the **QUICKEST** and **MOST UP-TO-DATE** information on the ever changing London bus scene members of LOTS receive our monthly Newsletter, The London Bus (TLB), which in one illustrated Newsletter covers all the current operators in the former London Transport area.

- Don't forget that several new publications are due in April and will be launched at the Cobham Museum Open Day.

- And don't forget that the **Autumn Transport Spectacular** will be at Harrow on the 29th October.

GO-AHEAD CHOOSES THE WRIGHT ROUTE FOR SUMMER HYBRIDS

There is increasing concern about carbon dioxide emissions, so bus operators will need to find an interim solution between now and 15 years hence, when hydrogen-powered fuel-cell buses might become an economic reality. That is the view of Phil Margrave, engineering director of Go-Ahead-owned London Central and London General, who has just ordered six Wright Electrocitiy buses for service in central London. They should be delivered this summer. London Central planned to operate 12 TransBus Enviro200H hybrids, but last year's TransBus collapse means there is no likelihood of them appearing this year.

So London Central has switched to the Electrocitiy, an example of which ran just over a year ago with Arriva London North and East Thames Buses. But these ones will feature one major change. Instead of the aerospace industry-sourced turbine running at 100,000rpm, they will have a European 1.9litre diesel engine to Euro4 specification.

The reason for the change is that the Capstone micro-turbine emitted quite high levels of carbon dioxide. Those from the so-far un-named diesel will be far lower. Wrightbus is about to begin testing the first bus built to the new design. Despite the change, most of the electrical parts are unaltered.

It is perhaps surprising that the more modern looking Solar/Eclipse body design has not been specified, but the reason is simple: Wright is not

offering it, yet no doubt because the original Electrocitiy prototypes were also developed with the older Cadet body — which it now calls 'classical style'.

The buses will provide about half the vehicles on route 360 (Elephant & Castle-Albert Hall), the rest being standard Dennis Dart SLF/

Plaxton Pointers. The route is unusual in being worked by single-deckers, whereas all other new routes introduced before the congestion charging scheme was introduced were double-deck. Use of the buses on the 360 will, it is hoped, give prominence to the experiment in central London.

Go-Ahead's Phil Margrave believes that hydrogen-powered fuel-cell buses may not become viable for another 15 years. The only examples in the UK, First London's three Mercedes-Benz Citaros, moved towards the end of last year from route 25 to the RV1 tourist service. The middle bus in the trio, ESQ64992 (LK53 MBU), was photographed in Catherine Street last December. MARK LYONS



VERY LOW AND VERY GOOD

Already on trial in London is another bus that is just as revolutionary as the Electrocitiy. It's the new Alexander Dennis Enviro200 single-decker first revealed alongside the now delayed

Enviro200H at Coach & Bus 2003. With a low gangway running the full length and an exit doorway at the far end of the bus, its design is ahead of anything else in the UK or on the Continent. The first London

operator to try it was London United, which had it on route 33 (Fulwell-Hammersmith). I managed a couple of rides.

'Bit peculiar, isn't it?' a middle-aged lady said to me as she waited for the rear exit doors to open. But most passengers seemed to accept its features with no

particular thought. However, when approaching their stop, some looked towards the middle of the bus and, seeing no doorway there (and not noticing the prominent signs pointing to the rear) left by the front door. Just inside the exit at the extreme rear is a standing position for two, with an upholstered panel to make it more comfortable. Young and middle-aged passengers seemed quite happy to stand here.

The only possible drawback is the way the rearmost leaf of the door protrudes beyond the back of the bus, but it might be possible to improve this layout with a non-standard door, with a wider leaf moving forward, and a narrower one opening to the rear. Internally, it sounds just like an ordinary Dart SLF, and the ride quality — despite the single rear wheels — was fine. Having a low floor the length of the bus eliminates the usual problem on conventional designs of people clustering around the centre exit and slowing down unloading.

SN54 GRU, the Alexander Dennis Enviro200 prototype, in service with London United on route 33. It gained a manufacturer's badge after being photographed for last month's Buses. MARK LYONS



ELUSIVE STAGECOACH HYBRID

I tried, unsuccessfully, on a couple of occasions to ride on Stagecoach's Designline Olymbus hybrid when it was on the 276 (Stoke Newington-Stratford-Newham General Hospital).

The route is a busy one and quite arduous with numerous twists and junctions. The New Zealand-built bus was only scheduled to do one morning and one afternoon round trip, but this was apparently too much for it at times. It is the first of a small batch bought by Stagecoach North East for a contracted service on Tyneside.

These experimental buses made me think of the early days in service for Routemaster prototype RM1 around 50 years ago. For its

time, it was surely one of the most expensive buses ever built and those who drove it were chosen carefully. But the bus was worked hard, being almost the first out and last back and clocked up nearly 1,000 miles in some weeks. The operator also owned the vehicle, which no doubt makes a difference. But today's bus trials, even the articulated ones, seem tame with usually just one dedicated driver. You won't learn much from that.

Another difference then was that London's experimental buses used to carry notices explaining their salient points and inviting the public to write in with their comments. There was nothing like that on the Enviro200, which was a pity.

ANOTHER NEW OPERATOR HITS TOWN

Another new name will appear on two west London bus routes in October/November, when National Car Parks takes over the 33 (Fulwell-Hammersmith) and 419 (Richmond-Hammersmith) from London United.

NCP, which recently appointed its first ever bussing manager at Heathrow, will need sufficient new single-deckers to cover the peak requirements of 18 vehicles on the 33 (the route on which the Enviro200 was tested) and the six on the 419.

London United has retained the other work that was up for grabs, with London Buses specifying new buses for double-deck 267

(Hammersmith-Fulwell), 13 in the peak, and single-deck 411 (Kingston-West Molesey), four in the peak, and one-vehicle school service 641. Existing double-deckers will operate the 131 (Kingston-Wimbledon) and 220/N220 (Harlesden-Wandsworth). First CentreWest retains double-deck 295 (Clapham Junction-Ladbroke Grove).

In south-east London, Metrobus retains the B14 (Bexleyheath-Orpington) route from February next year. This is one of the routes that Metrobus has just taken over from Tellings-Golden Miller (see News, p8).

Soon to add red London buses to its operations, NCP recently put a substantial fleet of Caetano Slimbus-bodied Mini Darts into its fleets at Heathrow and other British airports. The Peterborough registration on AE54 HYT betrays the fact that these buses were supplied by MCV, which also bodied larger MAN 14.220s for NCP. MARK LYONS



EXPENSIVE GARAGE

One of the first things that Transport for London did after being set up was to stop the planned sale of the former Walworth bus garage in south-east London.

It had closed in 1985 as surplus to requirements, but reopened in 1987 when it was used for the Red Arrow fleet until its new Waterloo base was ready, and again in 1992-97 when London & Country/Londonlinks based buses there. Despite a substantial rebuild in 1951, the premises — a London County Council tram depot dating from 1905 — were run down.

Refurbishment has cost £4.7 million. In addition to that, the tenant, the National Express Group's Travel London, paid for equipment such as fuelling facilities and bus washers as part of the price of returning to operate buses in London for the third time since privatisation. It has 50 buses based there, working on three routes, and there's room for another 50 should it submit more winning tenders. Being far-sighted, the fuelling and washing facilities can handle articulated buses.

A feature of the garage, and of other garages and bus stations built or modernised by TfL, is the provision of solar panels to provide some of the electric power. They also feature at Vauxhall interchange (for some reason it's not called a bus station), which came into use in December, months later than planned. Mayor Ken Livingstone made economical use of his time by officially opening both garage and interchange on the same February morning.

Vauxhall is a great achievement. Previously changing there from rail or tube to bus, or vice versa, was not for the faint-hearted, although there was some under-used road space. Now a splendid job has been made with one long and wide platform running a considerable length.

At the end nearest Vauxhall Bridge, the only platform widens to provide loading for Victoria-bound buses. The interchange contains some strange-looking buildings with stainless steel corrugated cladding, which makes them look rather like an American diner or 1930s caravan. Two high-level ramps projecting out from the station, and visible in last month's issue above two Routemasters on the 36, carry solar panels.

The statistics for the interchange are impressive, with 2,000 buses, 45,000 passengers, 712 tube trains and 700 surface trains calling there. Uncle Tom Cobbeley and All seem to have had a hand in the funding, with the London Borough of Lambeth, the Department of Trade & Industry, the London Development Agency, the Cross River Partnership among those involved.

Mention must also be made of another success, the fine new bus station opened at Walthamstow last year. The first bus station there was a humble affair built in 1969 to coincide with the opening of the Victoria Line. A better, busier and proper station had to follow later as usage increased. That subsequently proved too small, so now we have station number three.

BETTER DRIVERS

All 22,000 bus drivers should be trained or retrained to BTEC standard by the end of 2005, according to an announcement by Transport for London. That will not be before time, if you look at the latest annualised statistics involving buses. There are 2,600 injuries to passengers, 500 complaints about damage to cars and 20,000 complaints by passengers. That has to be measured against carriage of 6 million passengers a day.

Also bear in mind that the general standard of driving by other road users is often poor, with cutting-in in front of buses particularly prevalent. Even so, bus companies and their insurers — as well as passengers — will no doubt look forward to the improvements.

Whatever happened to...? ...south Ayrshire battles

Ten years ago, Stagecoach was still perceived as a buccaneering operator sometimes taking risks with competition law. So there was some national interest when it fell foul of a new rule curbing the use of unregistered duplicate journeys.

Our April 1995 issue reported that the Scottish traffic commissioner banned its Western Scottish subsidiary from registering any service for a year on the corridor between Ayr and Dalmellington.

As Sandy Macdonald reported in that month's Scottish Column, Western and a company called Carrick Coaches had been competing on the corridor from before Stagecoach's acquisition of Western the previous summer, but that the takeover had intensified the combat. A monitoring exercise

revealed that Stagecoach was running unregistered short workings.

While the ruling might have appeared to hand the route over to Carrick, the old established AA Buses — then an independent but taken over by Stagecoach two years later — stepped in to fill the gaps left by Western's enforced absence.

The story took a familiar ring last year when another independent, Ayrways, launched cut-price competing services on the same corridor. Stagecoach Western hit back with Magic Bus-branded single-deckers and bought Ayrways' local bus operations at the end of November. Since then, Ayrways has bought surplus Stagecoach buses for its school transport fleet.

C'est un autobus de l'Extremité du Sud

Even in their first life, I'm not certain that North Western Road Car's 1962 delivery of Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards was what might then have been called hip. And while we might have become quite excited in 1976/77 when Ensignbus lent VBD 915 to Southend Transport, I don't imagine that this was seen as any part of the emerging punk scene.

Yet my colleague Richard Delahoy has just had the bizarre experience of finding his picture of just that bus in its guise as Southend 205 being used on a CD cover for a French pop group called Cobalt, which he tells me

sounds like a Gallic version of Ireland's Corrs.

His tale is proof — should you need it to settle a domestic debate — of why bus photography is never a waste of time. Richard posts some of his pictures on a website called www.SCT61.org.uk that is devoted to Southend and Eastern National buses and it seems that someone at the record company found the website in a quest for images in cobalt blue. Having requested and obtained Richard's permission, a bit of digital magic whizzed 205 and native Weymann-bodied Leopard 207 from outside an Essex school to somewhere more romantic and pine-forested.



FOR ASPIRATIONAL BUS OWNERS?

This could be a lesson from Thailand in how to sell bus travel to owners of prestige cars. BMW may have transformed itself from a maker of 1950s bubble cars into the aspirational brand that it is today, but unless I've missed something, it doesn't manufacture buses. But as Nick Georgano's photograph shows, that hasn't stopped the owner of this Cherdchal-bodied Volvo from alleging otherwise. With that grille design, I half expected to see a Wrightbus badge as well.

What would Lady Bracknell say?

In this year of the disappearing Routemaster, Tony Wilson tells me that the Ben Sherman fashion label has released what he describes as a 'quite expensive pukka leather ladies' handbag' with an image of a No.73 RML on it.

Now that would have given Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell due cause to utter her cry of 'A handbag?'.

Tony tells me both his wife and daughter have been kitted out with same as modelled here by Mrs W. Given that this is a family magazine, I'm relieved to find that he didn't persuade her to do the same with some more intimate garments that the London's Transport Museum used to sell complete with Underground maps.



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WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN AN RML?

As several of you have been in touch to tell me, *The Guardian* came up the other week with the perfect revenge for all those pictures that put London Routemasters where they never ought to.

Perhaps betraying its roots as *The Manchester Guardian*, it illustrated a 16 February feature on the London Olympic games bid with pictures of a set of London icons. But as any red-blooded bus nut could tell at half a glance, the iconic red double-decker has never set wheel in London. The destination box may read 'London Bridge' and the via screen show [sic] 'Buckingham', 'Palace Albert' and 'Hall Big Ben' but even devoid of fleetnames, it's clearly identified as Lancashire United 70 (510 VTB), a 1961 Guy Arab IV with Northern Counties body.

Charitably, one of my informants suggests a tenuous London connection. As it was based at Swinton garage, it would have been a familiar sight at Victoria bus station... Salford. Or does *The Guardian* know more than the rest of us and is this what Ken Livingstone is buying to replace the Routemasters by 2012?



20 YEARS AGO

Just as today, parts of Britain were entertaining ideas of reintroducing trolleybuses in the mid-1980s, but our April 1985 issue brought news of a setback for the organisation in the forefront of the drive.

West Yorkshire PTE wanted to spend £5.9 million bringing trolleys back to Leeds for the first time since 1928 and another £2.1 million to return them to Bradford, from where the country's last trolleys had been withdrawn only 13 years before.

The plan was to run 52 double-deckers on a figure-of-eight network in Leeds and 19 on cross-city routes in Bradford. However, the government turned

down the PTE's request for a contribution towards the scheme, deferring the scheme at least by another year. While the PTE and Yorkshire Rider remained enthusiastic about the idea into the early-1990s, the dream remains just that today.

Our report said that Nicholas Ridley's Transport Bill — that which deregulated and privatised the bus industry — also threatened the scheme, as did South Yorkshire PTE's 'already well advanced' plans to reintroduce trolleybuses to Rotherham and Doncaster. West Yorkshire feared that these might undermine the national significance of its plans.

Twenty years after West Yorkshire's trolleybus bid was turned down, Bradford still only has memories of Britain's longest-lived system. 792 (GHN 574) at the Black Country Living Museum is a former Darlington Karrier W of 1944 with a 1958 East Lancs forward-entrance body. It began life as a single-decker.



SHRUNKEN BUS OF THE MONTH

This month's winner of a Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model for sending me a weird bus image goes to Malcolm Batten from east London. Many congratulations.

He caught up with the strangely shrunken London Routemaster RM110 back in 1993 at the North Weald Rally. It was among the buses sold to Clydeside Scottish in 1985, but it was back in London by 1992, when Smoke City Wheelers of Tottenham had it customised in a fashion that suggests only a child could have fitted in behind the steering wheel.

Keep your eyes open and your camera primed for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the usual address. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

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A model of a modern municipal

PETER HESKETH reports from Warrington, where the council-owned bus company is playing a key role in the town's expansion plans

Quality contracts and more localised operational control of bus services are very much on the front burner today, with the passenger transport executives making much of the political running. However, the few remaining municipal bus companies are in an interesting position. Most are owned by unitary authorities, which — unlike the PTEs — also are highway authorities with powers to introduce bus priorities and build new facilities like bus stations.

Warrington Borough Transport is a case in point. The town is thriving and expanding, but that has increased traffic congestion. On the cards is a multi-million pound town centre redevelopment, which will include the bus station, through a partnership between Warrington Borough Council (which owns WBT) and the private sector.

From the outset, WBT put itself forward as a key player. Its managing director, Nigel Featham, says that is essential if the town is serious about achieving yet more modal

shift. The plan is for the new town centre to double visitor numbers, but only to increase car parking spaces there from 1,400 to 1,800. WBT must be able to handle the increase in those visitor numbers, many of whom could be deterred by the frustration of trying to drive there by car.

Nigel Featham joined WBT soon after I profiled the company in October 1998 *Buses* and it was recovering successfully from the bus war initiated in the town by North Western under British Bus ownership. He came from Preston Bus, which he joined after leaving Leeds University and where he became traffic manager, spearheading the quality partnership initiative.

While Preston Bus is owned by its employees, WBT remains council-owned — with the unitary authority using the bus company to boost civic pride. 'The council is as focused on transport matters as we are,' he says. 'We're on common ground. Projects like the new bus station and real-time information mean we've to sit down together and talk. There's mutual understanding and the council gives us rock solid support.'

'Our immediate aim in 1999/2000 was to demonstrate our commitment by investing heavily in the fleet,' he adds, explaining that

Top pic: One of Warrington's rare MCV-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs, 31 (DA52 ZVK), in service last August. **JOHN YOUNG**

Left: The new standard bus is the Merit Midi, the Volvo-supplied version of the Wright-bodied VDL SB120. This is 42 (DE04 YNF).

ADRIAN L. SUCH



this is part of the wider strategy to increase passenger numbers. It controls costs and promotes reliability by running a standardised fleet.

Stable management team

WBT's youthful management team has changed little since 1998. Charlie Shannon, then traffic manager, is now operations manager; John Bannister still heads finance, while the engineering manager is Damian Graham. The whole team is important. On the company's 2002 Christmas card, all 245 employees from MD to cleaners were listed alphabetically.

As Nigel Featham concedes readily, it's all part of keeping staff on side. Cynics might write off an enjoyable safe driving awards evening as a temporary fix, but it's a vital piece of the whole process. All staff are consulted in respect of all aspects of the operation, with a formal consultation group meeting every two or three months. Its minutes are circulated across the company, complementing *Newswire*, the staff magazine.

Consultation has to be seen to work. Cabs of new buses were changed before delivery to incorporate a revised locker design when drivers were asked, and staff opinions about the new bus station layout and canteen facilities have formed part of the company's discussions with the council and developers. In 2002, staff played a key part in the organisation of the centenary celebrations. WBT achieved Investors in People status in March last year, with all drivers subject to continuous development, including defensive driving training by Transtech, while



Above: Typical of the smart secondhand Leyland Olympians is ex-Blazefield 63 (H514 RWX), with Northern Counties body. **ADRIAN L. SUCH**

Left: Nigel Featham, Warrington Borough Transport's managing director. **PETER HESKETH**

inspectors receive management input to reflect their widening role.

The company also acts on the advice of an active customer panel, which reports favourably on WBT's performance. Such things as the closed circuit television fitted in all recent deliveries, a good management tool in itself, re-assure customers and help attract new ones.

Real-time and route development

WBT projects itself as a high profile showcase, with bright modern buses, which are cleaned externally and internally each night, with a big clean every two weeks and an even bigger one every four.

A bright and highly informative route

diagram, MetroMap, supported by good quality timetables and an informative website containing all the traveller on the buses needs to know, were the perfect precursors for the introduction of WRTPI — Warrington Real Time Passenger Information System, supplied by Action Information Management at a cost of £2 million.

From an initial 150 information points, there will soon be 225, supplemented by a text-messaging facility. Every vehicle in the fleet — except preserved Leyland PD2 148 — is kitted out. Inspectors now have information at their fingertips to answer passenger queries accurately, and equally important and inextricably linked, to keep the buses moving — notably at Bridge Foot, long



Back in January 2001, Warrington took over some schools services from Arriva North West. The deal included eight ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians new to National Bus Company subsidiaries. 77 (A140 MRN) was originally with Ribble, 76 (A153 UDM) to Crosville. **TONY MOYES**

the Achilles heel of the bus network. Now patterns can be plotted and hard statistics given to the highway engineers for remedial work to be planned.

As with much else that it does, it's important that WRTPI is seen to work. Not only bus passengers, but also car drivers can log on to the WBT website to see how services are performing.

In the main, WBT is Warrington's local transport provider, but it does run beyond the borough boundary. When Arriva closed its (ex-'new' North Western) Warrington depot in 2002, WBT cut some out-of-town services in order to maintain the whole town network.

The Leigh trunk route remains, tapping into the business generated from journeys into that town from its extremities. Why turn round at Culcheth when people are standing at bus stops between there and Leigh?

Charlie Shannon says there is potential for growth in the borough's peripheral commercial expansion, and such development just outside it at places like Birchwood Park and Preston Brook. As a result, the company was quick to introduce special services to the likes of the O2 mobile phone company's massive centre at Preston Brook. These link into the rail-&-ride facility at Birchwood station and tap into United Utilities' growth with a service to three of its sites via the West Coast Main Line's Bank Quay railway station. Also on the horizon is the development of part of the old Burtonwood aerodrome as the Omega Business Park; if it reaches full capacity, it will employ in excess of 20,000, and nothing's more certain than that WBT will be there from Day One.

New single-decks and used Olympians

Forty-six new low-floor single-deckers have taken to the road since 1999, in a fleet currently numbering 115. Until recently, the company felt it had a winning combination in the Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart, but with Marshall's sudden demise, it had to look elsewhere. It took one final batch with Marshall-designed MCV bodies, but that choice ceased to be available through TransBus International.

The search took WBT to Northern Ireland and Wrightbus. 'Not the cheapest, but when viewed over the whole life, the best value,' says Charlie Shannon. The change of body supplier was an opportunity to upgrade interiors, with traditional benches replaced by individual seats, and LED destination displays superseding electrically wound blinds. Blinds might be easier to read, but they are not as robust.

Although WBT's cream and red livery is based on the corporation colours of old, Nigel Featham says those with an eye for detail will note that the cream replaced white relief. In the best traditions of municipal managers, this was one of Nigel Featham's first changes after he took over the reins.

Anyway, that was the bodywork sorted, but chassis/body choice is no longer as simple as in the days when most bodybuilders built on most chassis. Wright no longer bodied the



Above: Merit Midi 48 (DE04 YND) pulling into one of the stops with real time passenger information. **PETER HESKETH**

Dart, so it had to be the similar VDL SB120s, supplied in this case by Volvo as the Merit Midi. WBT hasn't been disappointed, and was impressed by Volvo's swift response to an early electrical fault on some.

While new acquisitions for the front line fleet have been low-floor single-deckers, the company had to upgrade the double-deck fleet used for schools services and some peak journeys. Older Leyland Olympians are being replaced by newer secondhand examples from such as Dublin Bus and Blazefield — all of them into a predominantly red livery before entering service.

Damian Graham's team has to keep in tune with the latest technology to maintain today's technically complex buses. Repainting and some test preparation work is out-sourced, but day-to-day tasks are done in-house. After the new automatic bus wash was installed, the old steam cleaning lift was replaced by a fixed ramp and a new maintenance lift — the latter essential as low-floor buses leave less headroom in the pits.

The company is on the lookout constantly for ways to generate more income, especially by filling spare capacity. Present staffing levels and facility availability allow for 2,000 slots in a 35hr week, leaving space for third party work. Offering its skills and facilities to other bus, coach and truck operators, along with public MoT testing, are valuable sources of income that keep the shareholders happy.

But WBT recognises that it must never lose sight of its core business of running buses. That helps explain why its CoachLines coaching arm withered and died some time

ago, although private hires — using buses with coach seats — remain a good earner with potential to grow in future. If this side of the business is to be promoted more proactively, at least one proper coach, with seat belts, would be useful especially for longer journeys, and is something on the agenda for the future.

Growth is the goal

The future goal is for sustainable growth. Another large-scale bus war looks unlikely (there's a dearth of drivers, in any case) and the only aggressive competition comes from Bennett's, a local firm competing on a route out to Woolston in the east. WBT's next new buses are earmarked for that route, with Nigel Featham talking of customers being given the choice of riding on a new comfortable, accessible WBT bus or one of Bennett's older, step-entrance ones.

The key, however, is the partnership with the council. 'We're looking forward with excitement about working with the local authority,' says Nigel Featham. 'Warrington's transport plan for 2006 sets targets and goals to be achieved by 2011. Early signs are that WBT is making a difference already.'

Indeed, I would go so far as to say that without the integrated transport provider, WBT, rapid growth would end in gridlock, discouraging businesses and visitors, rather than drawing them to the town. Some will say this is the ultimate argument for the spread of locally publicly owned buses. Time in Warrington might well tell.

THE SCOTTISH VINTAGE BUS MUSEUM 2005 SEASON EVENTS

SUNDAY 15 MAY

SVBM is celebrating 20 years as a charitable trust and 10 years in its premises at Lathalmond, Fife, with a special event on Sunday 15 May, including displays of preserved buses and brand-new vehicles, plus the usual trade stalls, hot food and refreshments.

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Here comes the four-week lesson

PETER BROWN takes a look at a new driver training regime that First is implementing in Bath

The public perception of a bus driver seems to be that if you can drive a car then you can be put in charge of a passenger-carrying vehicle. To those of us in the know, that is far from the truth.

To find out how driver training is changing, we called into First Somerset & Avon's Weston Island depot in Bath, where a six-month trial is underway of a new training regime that the Driving Standards Agency might adopt as the possible model for the future.

On the day of my visit, it is a busy place indeed with anxious trainees waiting to be examined and newer recruits watching in anticipation, knowing that in a few weeks' time they will be put under the same pressure. Driver trainer Andy Griffin explains that the former three-week course could universally be consigned to history if the experimental four-week one is deemed a success. He tells me he joined the company in 1985 when it was still Bristol Omnibus and found himself driving Bristol REs and VRs, later Leyland Lynxes.

The new course isn't just a week longer; it's also totally different to traditional training methods, with closer one-to-one tuition through the use of personal logs. The examiner makes comments to supplement the trainees' notes. It's also about a lot more than just driving. Instead of trainees visiting the depot daily for an instructional drive and help with the Highway Code, there is much more customer orientated training and a health and safety briefing. It makes use of computer aids and there also is a nightly diet of homework.

'Our recruits are any age,' he tells me. 'We recently had a recruit who was 62 and hoped to do the job part-time. Unfortunately, he didn't make the grade. We have people from the minimum age of 18 right up until they are in their 50s.'

'What is different now is that there is a two-part theory test. The first part is straight questions while the second part is hazard perception. In that one, there is particular emphasis on being able to perceive what is going to happen and how to deal with it. It is far more than the old defensive driving.'

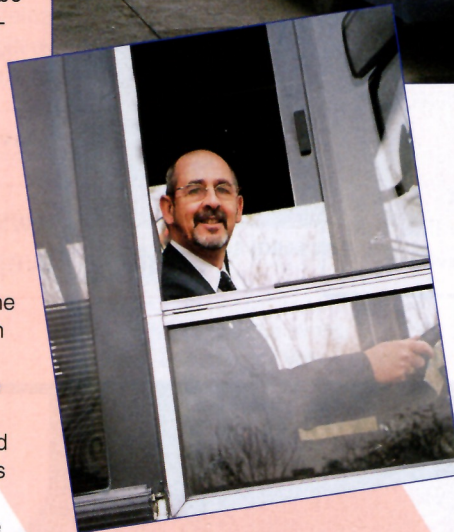
60% pass rate

'This new pilot scheme is creating a lot of interest,' he says. 'Before, a driver had to go into a classroom for a week to define driving. We now do it in small groups rather than everyone sitting in a classroom for a whole week.' It is producing a 60% first time pass rate and that appears to be acceptable to the company, which always allows a second chance on the assumption that the failed trainee can put the mistakes right on the next occasion. The common failures are for hitting a kerb or for not thinking ahead. The trainees always know where they went wrong.

'Much of the training is covered with a computer. We now have one in the office and



Above: One of the two Plaxton Paramount-bodied Volvo B9M driver trainers at Bath is 90188 (E752 YDY), new to Hallmark in 1988. Behind is a vehicle twice its length, an articulated Wright-bodied Volvo B7LA transferred recently from Aircoach in Dublin. **PETER BROWN**



Left: Driver trainer Andy Griffin at the wheel of the B9M. **PETER BROWN**

much emphasis is put on manual gear changing. It is these minibuses that the successful trainees will probably be driving first as well as a Dennis Dart SLF.

Out behind the wheel

Cold and wet, we wait in the yard to hear if one of the trainees has passed. Sadly, he has failed at his second attempt, but Andy Griffin says he is an 'excellent' driver and he will put him through for a third attempt one week hence.

The other trainees are anxious to get out on the road and it is decided they will do a run over the official test route that apparently has one or two variations. At the wheel of the B9M, a woman who previously was a professional recovery vehicle driver hears Andy Griffin telling her in a decisive but friendly manner where she is going wrong. 'Remember what we said, plenty of mirror checks,' he says for all to hear as we turn left into Lower Bristol Road towards Bath city centre.

'A little speed,' he advises at one point before getting her to pull up at a bus stop on a hill. He is happy with her positioning of the bus. 'You want to be in a position where it's easy for the passenger to get off,' he adds. Unfortunately, she makes a poor attempt at pulling away from the stop, prompting our trainer to smile at us and remark: 'That's technically known as an Asda — always rolling back.'

the hazard protection disks play a major part in this,' he says. An information CD-ROM called *DSA Theory Test* is one of the main learning tools given to recruits on this course. Assuming they have access to a computer, this is meant to be a major part of homework study.

There are also two driving test CD-ROMs, each with over 100 video clips of potential hazards. The first deals with hazard perception on main roads, motorways and rural areas. The second looks at pedestrians and town and city hazards. Trainees are also handed out an updated edition of the *Official Theory Test for Drivers of Large Vehicles*. This contains multiple choice questions of the theory test and gives trainees a chance to create their own examinations.

Trainees at Weston Island do most of their practical driving training on one of two Volvo B9Ms with manual gearboxes. These are in demand at the moment following the arrival of 40 Polish drivers. A Lynx is for automatic work and Andy Griffin tells me they were about to bring 12m Dennis Javelins into the equation, as the 9m Volvos are considered too short for preparing for many of the new vehicles.

The sight of a Mercedes-Benz 709D in the yard answers the question as to why so



Right: Among First's more unusual driver training vehicles is 50488 (E812 MOU) in the Devon & Cornwall fleet, photographed in March 2003. This Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D has been lengthened front and back to meet the DSA's minimum length requirements. **ANDY IZATT**

Keeping up his momentum to instil into the recruits that they should be prepared for anything, he advises them not to take the test route for granted. 'On a test route you can go round 100 times and never get the same scenario,' he says. Back at the depot, he leads us round the vehicle, showing us various parts before giving one recruit his first experience of bus driving. But before that he hands out the vital card containing the 10-point checks including air pressures and leaks.

Liking how this new trainee is performing in the yard doing circles and getting to grips with braking, it is decided that he too should make his first drive on such a vehicle round Bath. A former lorry driver, he completes the course with minimal criticism from the instructor.

In the same set of recruits is a bus driver who had worked for other companies in various parts of the country — notably in London. He is here mainly for type training and gives us a comparatively smooth ride all the way, negotiating the tourists with ease as they spill off the pavement into the path of his bus.

Another is a 50-year-old former soldier. He is a qualified carpenter and scenery maker who has been unable to work for two years following a hip replacement operation. He is determined to pass and get back into work. 'I have failed but I am being given another chance,' he gratefully tells us. 'They knew all about my disability problem and I had to get the all-clear from my own doctor. He was reluctant at first but eventually said "yes". I had to have a company medical and I passed that.

'Doing this means a lot to me. I haven't exactly found it tough but very disappointing that I failed. It will be a major blow for my family and me if I fail again. I am annoyed with myself because I failed on stupid things.'



Reasons to be careful

The day has been a long one for DSA delegated driving examiner John Bowyer, who joined Bristol Omnibus 25 years ago as a driver and after six years as an instructor became an examiner in March 1993.

'There are more regulations than ever and that is why there are the changes,' he points out. 'The test when I first started was the driving and questions on the Highway Code and safety. But that has changed to theory and hazard perception.'

He says the difference between pass and failure on test is based on how many minor and major marks are given. 'They are rarely failed on minor marks,' he adds. 'I am well aware that many are nervous on test. They have to get over that because at the end of the day they have a responsible job. The perception among the public about bus driving is very different to reality.'

'In reality, it's not that easy. The test is approximately just over an hour. It includes reverse, then a drive for an hour round Bath with such things as pull-ups at bus stops, a bell stop. I don't have an input to driver training for obvious reasons, although I do see the recruits with the theory test.'

'That's the reason we have to be so careful,' he remarks as we catch a glimpse of one of the company's newest Volvo B7RLEs. 'That vehicle costs upward of £150,000 and that's before the priceless cargo.'



Left: Plaxton Paramount-bodied First Cymru 90209 (C717 DDE) is one of three ex-Davies of Pencader Leyland Tiger 12m coaches used as driver trainers. It carried a Welsh language recruitment advertisement for professional drivers when photographed at Port Talbot in March 2003. **STEVE POWELL**

THE FENTON FILE THE FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON finds a now rare AEC Reliance coach with a rarer still choice of body for such a classic British chassis

As time passes, it is inevitable that the sight of an AEC coach is now sufficiently rare to be considered noteworthy. After all, more than 40 years have passed since the company was euphemistically 'merged with' (or more accurately taken over by) its great rival Leyland, and more than 25 since its last Reliance was built and the Southall factory closed its doors for the last time in 1979.

Of the Reliances I have seen in recent times, one of the most unusual has to be LIW 5184, based on the 1973 chassis of HFN 60L, which originally had Duple Dominant coachwork. Along with a few others, it was rebodied by Berkhof in Valkenswaard, Netherlands in 1984 to the requirements of its original owner, East Kent. At the same time, it was re-registered A202 TAR and given a new chassis number.

By the time I saw it at York Races in July 2003, it had passed into the ownership of the small South Yorkshire independent,

C&G Travel of Wath-upon-Deerne, near Rotherham, its rich red paintwork standing out from the line of white coaches behind it. Clearly, this was a highly regarded machine and its appearance was further enhanced by the fitting of gleaming wheel embellishers and, better still, a winged AEC badge.



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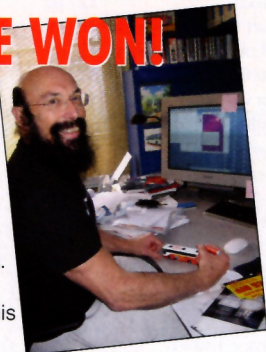
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Southampton docks its last Atlanteans

A farewell event in February marked the end of another of First's few remaining fleets of first generation rear-engined double-deckers. **DAVID JUKES** pays tribute to these workhorses of his adopted city



Given the rivalry between Portsmouth and Southampton, you might be surprised that a native of the former has an appreciation of the latter's Leyland Atlantean fleet. But my marriage in 1991 and move to Shirley, Southampton coincided with the wholesale replacement of the Portsmouth Atlanteans fleet — with which I had grown up — by Transit Holdings' minibuses. Southampton's proved a noble substitute.

The Southampton Atlantean era survived a brief move back to Portsmouth nine years later and only finally ended on 5 February

when First Hampshire & Dorset held a farewell running day for a type that served the city for over 35 years. Following the earlier retirement of the fleets in Leeds, Manchester, Aberdeen and Glasgow, this was also First's last major city operation with Atlanteans.

Southampton City Transport bought 175 recognisably similar examples between 1968 and 1982. All had standard East Lancs bodywork of their day, in this case distinguished by a single-piece double curvature windscreen. By the time I moved there, just four of the earlier PDR1A/1 models

Above: Preserved Atlantean 252 (YRV 252V) — restored to pre-1986 livery — at Mayflower Park on 5 February. It is carrying a full load during the farewell running day.

Pictures by DAVID JUKES

were still in service — 122 as driver trainer 920 (set aside for preservation in 1992, it was scrapped in 1995), wheelchair accessible 133/4 and open-top 139.

Of these, 133/4 operated the Wheels on Wheels services until withdrawal in 1996, while 139 was converted to operate the city tour in 1984 and became part of the Red Ensign fleet for private hires and special duties from 1988. It gained Guide Friday livery for the 1994 tour season, transferred to Guide Friday ownership in late 1995 but remained garaged by Citybus until tour operation ceased.

Until 1986, when SCT was reformed as Southampton Citybus Ltd, the Atlanteans wore a predominantly cream livery, but Leyland Olympian 280 — one of a small batch bought for evaluation in 1984 — wore a reversed version and this became the standard livery in 1986. Most remaining Atlanteans received this style before a simplified overall red with black window surrounds and skirt was introduced on a batch of Dennis Dominators in January 1989. Black



Left: 262 (DBK 262W) in Shirley High Street in September 1997, with First CityBus fleetnames and black upper deck window surrounds.

- (1) Chassis intended for 123 (TTR 157H) destroyed by fire at East Lancs factory. No other vehicle was purchased as replacement.
- (2) Batch introduced restyling of rear bodywork to Southampton. From 202 lower deck rear screen and upper deck emergency exit glazed area enlarged plus lower dash panel revised.
- (3) Batch introduced revised front upper deck glazing. From 262 a slender dividing bar within single opening replaced twin windows previously installed.
- (4) 133/4 were converted 1985 to H45/17F plus four wheelchairs, modified 1986 to H45/13F plus six wheelchairs and front doorway lift.
- (5) 165/76/98/9, 201 rebodied as single-deckers 352, 350/1/4/3 (OJI 1879/70/1/4/3); at least 352 carried new bodywork and original registration for a short period

Southampton's Atlanteans

101-20	OCR 145-8G, OCR 149F, OCR 150-64G	PDR1/1	H45/31F
121/2/4-36 (1) (4)	TTR 155/ 6/8-70H	PDR1A/1	H45/31F
137-61	WOW 527-51J	PDR1A/1	H45/31F
162-71 (5)	EOW 395-404L	AN68/1R	H45/31F
172-86 (5)	PCR 295-309M	AN68/1R	H45/31F
187-201 (5)	JBK 886P, HTR 558-64, 557/65-70P	AN68/1R	H45/31F
202-19 (2)	MCR 202-16R, ORV 90S, MCR 218R, ORV 89S	AN68A/1R	H45/31F
220-31	PBP 220-31S	AN68A/1R	H45/31F
232-46	UPO 232-46T	AN68A/1R	H45/31F
247-61	YRV 247-61V	AN68A/1R	H45/31F
262-6 (3)	DBK 262-6W	AN68A/1R	H45/31F
267-71	FTR 267-71X	AN68C/1R	H45/31F
272-6	KOW 272-6Y	AN68C/1R	H45/33F

Ex-Plymouth 116-28 (OCO 116-20S, STK 121-8T) were AN68A/1Rs with Roe H43/28D bodies. 116 was soon converted to a playbus and sold, the remainder converted to H43/28F although another five were sold soon after conversion.

Top right: First's national identity has gone through several changes, as evidenced by the unusual application of a First Southampton fleetname on 267 (FTR 267X) in Bar Street in June 1998.

Bottom right: The post-1986 reversed livery on 208 (MCR 208R) in Vincents Walk in August 1991. It has two versions of the Citybus fleetname.

relief ceased to be applied to the oldest Atlanteans from the following year.

Citybus and Portsmouth City Transport employees formed a joint venture to buy that undertaking on 8 June 1988. As a result, Portsmouth 9 (ERV 250D), an MCW-bodied PDR1/1 open-topper, became Southampton 506, carrying an overall livery for Southampton City Tourism. When Stagecoach bought the Portsmouth operations on 24 October 1989, it remained in Southampton along with two of Portsmouth's Alexander-bodied AN68s. The plan was to cannibalise the AN68s, but 277 (XTP 277L) was converted into mobile office and information vehicle 509. On expiry of 506's advert it was exchanged with Southdown Portsmouth for its identical 8 (ERV 249D) that had retained Red Ensign livery after sale by Southampton; this became the new 506.

Life extension

As the 1990s dawned, Citybus embarked on two projects to extend the lives of its Atlanteans. With a view to gaining an extra five years' life out of the newest 75, 228 was refurbished with soft-trimmed cab, new flooring, re-upholstered seating (with five fewer seats upstairs) and replacement heating. Others followed it to this 'Hiliner' specification, including 242, which gained the roof of withdrawn 170 after hitting the Swaythling Arch.



Only some of the 75 were refurbished; they were identifiable by the lack of grille beneath the windscreen.

More outstanding was the rebodding of five others during 1991 as 'Atlantean Sprints' with East Lancs EL2000 single-deck bodies. These unusual buses served the Hampshire/West Sussex borders after Citybus acquired the routes of the independent Hants & Sussex business.

During 1992/93, the Dominators and Olympians were sold and 13 older Roebodied Atlanteans were purchased from Plymouth Citybus. During 1992, the Citybus fleet was named after a large variety of vessels with Southampton connections; 191 became *Achille Lauro* sharing its name with a cruise vessel that met an unfortunate fate.

Meanwhile, ex-Portsmouth 506 re-emerged with a new owner, number and livery following franchising of the City Tour to Bournemouth Heritage Transport for 1992, regaining its original Portsmouth number (249) and carrying Southampton colours in traditional Portsmouth layout.

Citybus's employees bought the company from the council on 22 December 1993, but there was no change in its appearance to the public. By then, Atlanteans dedicated to school duties carried a yellow band above the lower deck windows and 'Schoolbus' fleetname on the sides. These older buses were showing their age. Rain leakage and bodywork rattles were evident on the more tired examples, leading to many an interesting (and occasionally noisy) ride. The EOW-L batch retired by 1994, the PCR-M, JBK-P and HTR-P batches during 1996.



Above: One of the five Atlantean Sprint single-deckers, 352 (EOW 398L), at Central Station in January 1992 while working a Red Funnel ferry shuttle. The chassis was from bus 165 and it was later re-registered OJI 1879.

Into the First era

When FirstGroup bought the company on 28 July 1997, it inherited the final 75 double-deckers, the five Sprint single-deckers and ex-Plymouth 119, 121-6/8. The MCR-R batch was withdrawn within 18 months, half the PBP-S batch soon following with the ex-Plymouth vehicles. Little time was wasted in applying First identity, all vehicles immediately receiving the *f* symbol and First text within side and rear windows. Full repaints soon omitted black relief. School buses retained yellow relief although many were only partially repainted.

With the cessation of Hants & Sussex operations, the single-deckers returned to Southampton in time to be used on the Christmas 1998 park-&-ride service. They were sold during 2000.

To avoid duplications with the co-managed Provincial fleet, 224-40/2-76 (and single-deckers 350-4) were renumbered 1224 etc in March 1999. Even though their Southampton careers were coming to an end, First transferred 1229/30/4/8/43 to Huddersfield in 2000 and 1255/7/66 to Leicester the following year.

SchoolBus-liveried 1270/6 gained branding for Metro services 5/A and 11/A in February 2001 and during 2002 survivor 1264 had the distinction of being the only Southampton Atlantean repainted in Barbie 2 secondary corporate livery. The working fleet was down to just 14 buses — 1252/6/63-5/8-76 — in January 2004 when national renumbering re-identified them as 38252 etc. By early January this year, 38270 was the only example left in service.



One of the interlopers from Portsmouth, *Queen Mary* 506 (ERV 249D), on the city tour in August 1992.

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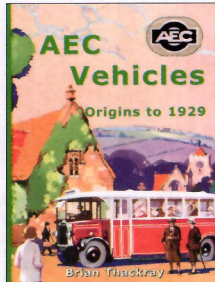
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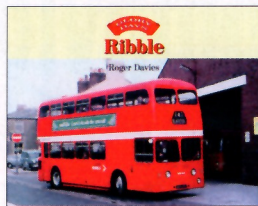
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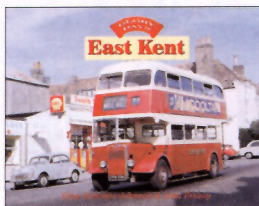
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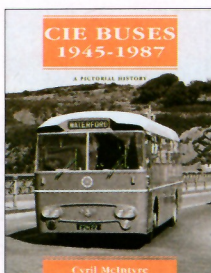
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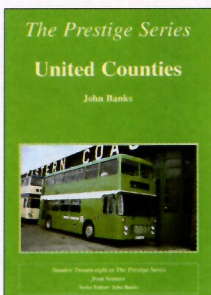
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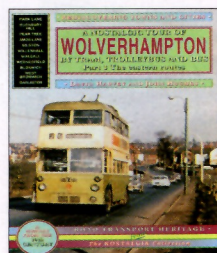
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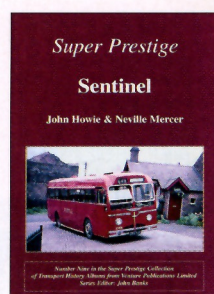
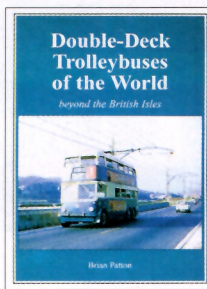
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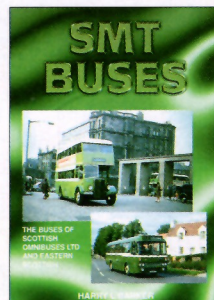
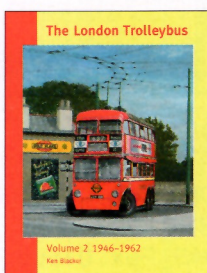


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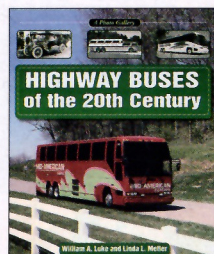
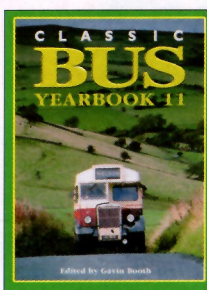
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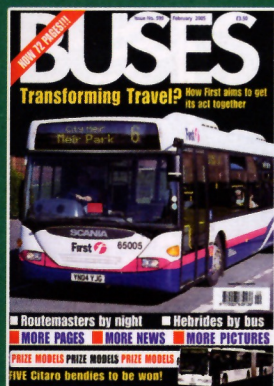
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MALTA BUS RACES INTO RECORD BOOKS

Maltese bus owners like to compete with each other. Traditionally it's been about fancy decoration or aural supremacy. More recently, sheer power. 'Big-rig' Cummins and DAF engines have transformed otherwise innocent bus chassis into formidably fast machines, like the AEC Swift we featured in our October 2002 issue.

The indomitable Maltese spirit has seized the moment in an unusual way as the new bus influx has led to a surplus of old-style buses. And what started as a jest between two old bangers has sparked an off-road performance competition between a few owners.

We hear that a new phrase — 'hot street buses' — has entered the island's lingo and is rapidly gaining a following, with the first public event due to take place a fortnight after this issue goes on sale.

This amazing view shows very 'hot' 1940s Casha-bodied Ford V8 FBY 663 in action — a real surprise in itself, as everyone

thought this bus was scrapped in the 1980s. Like some other Ford V8s, it carries a Dodge front end. Now proudly named *'tieghi almu sbuhija'* — translating as *'my daring beauty'* — its driver's name inside reads *'t'al berqa'* or *'lightning'*.

Latterly, it had a Leyland engine, but it's once again a V8. But this new unit is a fearsome supercharged one from an American 'top fuel' dragster — with a bark to match. It's fired by an exotic blend of nitromethane and methanol commonly found in drag racing cars, nitromethane being like gasoline pre-mixed with nitrous oxide. This mix vastly multiplies the amount of power produced, simply by changing the fuel.

Our spy on the island — Sid 'Jet' Longhno — confides: 'I can tell you, the noise from this thing is absolutely earth shattering. Developing several thousand horsepower and burning close to four litres of nitromethane per second at full throttle, I stood in awe as it literally catapulted itself down the quarter-mile practice strip. It engulfed me in huge

clouds of smoke from its spinning tyres, its engine dramatically pumping out still-burning nitromethane causing spectacular flames from the exhaust.'

What would those be-suited gents from the European Commission who compared Valletta's bus departures to Roman chariot races a year or two ago say if they saw this?



Ken's articulated icon

Stung by criticism of the decision to retire the Routemaster and introduce German articulated single-deckers to the streets of the UK capital, Mayor Ken Livingstone has persuaded Transport for London to commission a new big red bus icon. A very big one.

A prototype 18m articulated double-decker has been developed in partnership with Arriva, Wrightbus and VDL Bus. Be prepared for controversy, though, for one of the biggest challenges has been to match the rapid crowd-shifting speeds of the Citaro artic. We gather it has been answered by installing a fast escalator in place of the normally fixed offside straight stairway — a benefit of TfL's straight staircase layout — and by installing two nearside soft-

trimmed chutes for passengers to slide downstairs at speed.

While the disability lobby is unhappy about the alighting arrangements, many drivers would prefer the system used to collect mailbags from moving trains. 'I'd prefer hooks and bags, especially for rowdy schoolchildren,' one confessed. 'Chuting is too good for them.'

This behemoth is known for now as the Axxess Pulsar Renown Interstellar Liberator Fusion Opus Optima Laser. 'We know that sounds a mouthful,' admits a Wrightbus executive, 'but having put all our effort into designing it, we put all of our names into it, too.' Expect to hear the abbreviated name when a half-day trial begins exactly two weeks after this magazine reaches the shops.



Green is the new red

Wilts & Dorset's rebranding is being rethought to combat an unanticipated setback. A dearth of red paint.

Paint factory bosses have been left blushing as they struggle to satisfy demand for this primary colour. 'Orders shot up by 20% when Transport for London dropped its 80% red rule,' one admitted to us, 'and there's been a surge of sales on Merseyside since Glenvale took over CMT.'

An already precarious position became critical when the people at Poole decided their standard livery should be London red with a 'swoosh' of blue. The price of the makeover rocketed, so they asked their livery consultant

Samantha Beeley to try a colour that's in abundant supply at a fraction of the price. Green.

With verdant buses out of fashion, gallons of the stuff are stacked up going nowhere. Except on to Southern Vectis's latest Darts. Happily, the Poole people also own the Hants & Dorset name and remember that while W&D's buses once were Tilling red, H&D's were green. Combined with that vital blue 'swoosh', the alternative colour and H&D name will be aired on a new Eclipse Urban. 'It's not what we had in mind,' admits a Go-Ahead insider, 'but it conveys that we connect coast and country. We'd be fools not to try it.'



*** Reports and pictures by JOHN G. LIDSTONE and MARK LYONS**

Fleet modernisation has removed many of the elderly buses from the roads of Malta, but these photographs taken last October by **JOHN YOUNG** show that the scene on the Mediterranean island remains varied



Top left: **EBY 637**, an East Lancs-bodied Leyland Tiger Cub PSU1/13, began life in 1967 as Blackburn Corporation 13 (GBV 13E).

Bottom left: **Plaxton Elite-bodied Bedford YRQs** are a rare sight in their native UK. **FBY 796** — seen at Ghadira Bay — was new around 30 years ago as **SJR 428N**.

Above right: Among several former London Transport **AEC Swifts** still giving sterling Maltese service is Marshall-bodied **DBY 321**, former **SM13 (AML 13H)**, photographed at Cirkewwa, the Maltese terminal for the Gozo ferry. It was part of LT's original batch of 50 single-door 42-seat Swifts and was sold out of London service in January 1981.

Right: Another refugee from a major UK fleet is **EBY 543**, a Plaxton Derwent-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU4C/4R new to West Yorkshire PTE as **8524 (LUG 524P)**. It is at Bugibba.

Below: Typical of the surviving older Maltese buses is **DBY 308**, a Maltese Docks-rebuilt AEC with Tonna bodywork. The location is St Paul's Bay.



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JOHN HOWIE & NEVILLE MERCER, VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, ISBN 1 898432 50 3, 235MM x 165MM, 160pp SOFTBACK, £18.95

Venture's Super Prestige series is starting to yield some little gems.

Paul Carter's recent volume on Cambridge earned our fulsome praise and this latest volume — the ninth in the series — is another genuine piece of historical research.

Sentinel, should you not know, was a steam lorry builder that turned hurriedly to diesels. It enjoyed a brief flourish in the immediate postwar bus market when, in 1948, it had the courage to develop and build integral construction

underfloor-engined single-deckers when mainstream manufacturers and operators were still wedded to halfcabs and relationships with individual bodybuilders.

The pinnacle of its achievement was to secure orders from Ribble for 20 of these buses — perhaps as much to scare Leyland into accelerating the development of its own Olympic and Royal Tiger as out of any loyalty to Sentinel. But the marque was so badly let down by the unreliability of its home-produced engines that BET, which owned Ribble, dropped it rapidly from its list of approved suppliers. When Sentinel shut down in 1956 (and Rolls-Royce turned its Shrewsbury plant into an engine factory), it had built only 146 chassis, of which 125 received psv bodywork for UK operation.

As the book explains, Sentinel's engines were not just unreliable, but prone to overheating and sometimes catching fire — a reputation that did as much damage to the company's ambitions in the lorry market. The book includes an account of a demonstrator that 'dropped an engine' on an ill-starred demonstration visit to the Netherlands.

This history helps put a lot of the short Sentinel bus story into context. The company's origins were in Glasgow, where it grew out of a strong steam engineering tradition for the maritime and railway industries, then moved steam wagon building to Shrewsbury to be nearer the larger English market. It was in the ownership of the Metal Industries group, which bought the company in 1941, that it gambled on becoming a big player in buses and coaches. Although its earliest buses had Beadle-built bodies, 61 (including those for Ribble) were bodied at Shrewsbury using Beadle patents and with parts supplied by Welsh Metal Industries.

This is partly a heroic tale of dream that didn't come true, but two things make the book so

attractive. One is the human aspect, the explanation of where and why things went wrong, the disillusionment that prompted sales staff to leave for more promising pastures, and the false optimism that had their successors convinced they could replace the lost big fleet orders with sales to rural independents.

Its other great strength is the quality of writing. This is no dry history, but one that is not only well written, but colourfully so. Let me quote two extracts. 'They had charisma. Back in 1948, they had been the James Dean of the British bus industry, a young iconoclastic upstart that dared to be the first and then carried it to market a clear two years ahead of its establishment competitors at AEC and Leyland.' Or writing about the appeal of seeking out these rare buses: 'A holiday romance turned into a lifetime's attraction for many a bus enthusiast, and chance encounters by the seaside could lead to irrational expeditions into the depths of Shropshire where Sentinels lived in a land beyond time called Telford New Town'. It's not every day that you get to read and enjoy that quality of description in a bus book.

The authors also expand the story to include pocket histories of all known operators of all known Sentinels, with an inevitably larger section on the Ribble vehicles.

ALAN MILLAR

THE PRESTIGE SERIES: UNITED COUNTIES

JOHN BANKS, VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, ISBN 1 898432 49 X, 235MM x 165MM, 64pp SOFTBACK, £9.50

The Prestige series of monochrome picture books reaches its 28th volume with this focus on the rare beast that was a Tilling Group company in which the railways had no financial stake. These books don't pretend to be comprehensive histories, but present pictures down the ages of many of the bus and coach types that they ran. As with many of the others in the series, several of the pictures were taken by Geoffrey Atkins, whose work these days is in John Banks's own photographic collection. The pictures cover the story from the formation of the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company in 1919 to 1986, when United Counties was split in three ahead of National Bus Company privatisation.

ALAN MILLAR

HIGHWAY BUSES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

WILLIAM A. LUKE & LINDA L. METLER, ICONOGRAFIX (USA), 280MM x 215MM, 158pp SOFTBACK, £19.99

Regular Buses contributor Bill Luke and collaborator Linda Metler have produced here

what must be the definitive photographic catalogue/listing of all coaches available in North America during the past century.

Besides the familiar ACF, Eagle, General Motors, Fageol, Flixible, Mack, Prevost

(pictured here), Yellow Coach, etc, etc, there are the less well-known names of Aerocoach, Beck, Fargo, Garwood, Kenworth and

others. Also featuring in this book's pre-World War 2 deliveries are some stunning AEC and Leyland coaches.

The 1980-onwards foreign invasion of this market is well covered with Cametal (Argentina), Dina, Hino, LAG, MAN, Mercedes-Benz, Auwarter-Neoplan, Renault, Setra, Van Hool *et al*. You name it, they've covered it — artics, rigids, double-decks, one-and-a-half decks — they are all here. And all coaches, not buses. With over 300 monochrome photos, this book is recommended highly.

MICHAEL DRYHURST

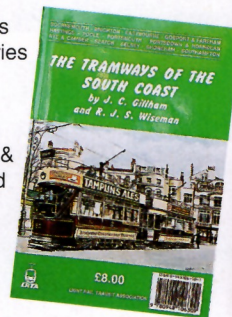


THE TRAMWAYS OF THE SOUTH COAST

J. C. GILLHAM & R. J. S. WISEMAN, LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT ASSOCIATION, ISBN 0 948106 30 1, 215MM x 140MM, 72pp SOFTBACK, £8

This latest in the LRTA's series of network histories covers the tramway systems stretched between Poole and Bournemouth and Ryde & Camber, with the added bonus of today's small scale Seaton Tramway in Devon. While systems like those in Bournemouth, Southampton, Gosport & Fareham and Brighton dominate, there also are such other esoteric delights as the Hellingly Hospital Tramway and the sea-going Volks 'daddy long legs' railway that ran between Brighton and Rottingdean only from 1896 to 1901.

ALAN MILLAR



MAPS

GREATER LONDON BUS MAPS

Published by MIKE HARRIS. No.25 (6 November 2004) £1.50. 1939 historic map £4.

Over the past 10 years, 24 editions of Mike Harris's bus maps have kept alive a style of publication that used to be a London Transport standard, showing all routes operated in the capital. They also have raised over £12,000 for human and animal charities, and at least 10p of the sale of each of the latest edition will

raise funds for The Down's Syndrome Association.

In many ways, the lists of routes on these maps are as revealing as the maps themselves and the sheer density of today's network — by comparison with that running immediately before World War 2 — helps explain why LT's successors haven't published a system-wide map. It's great for enthusiasts, but is a trial for a casual bus user to plot a journey from A to B.

Among the many comparisons between then and now that these maps present is in night service provision. In June 1939, there were just five night bus routes, four trolleybus and seven tram routes, none of which ran on Saturday or Sunday mornings. By November last year, there were 55 N-prefixed routes and a further 44 services had 24hr schedules, and you can

bet your last Travelcard that most would be at their busiest at weekends.

Another is how much shorter many of today's routes are in the

marathon cross-city route from Acton Town to Belmont, today confines itself to linking Camden Town and Clapham Common.

ALAN MILLAR

MODELS CREATIVE MASTER NORTHCORD 1/76th SCALE BLUEBIRD MINI POINTER DART Guide price £17.75

I have to confess that as a poor, jobbing bus writer, I haven't been able to keep up with the vast output of the model bus makers of late — though I am the proud possessor of one of Sunstar's fabulous Routemasters, which I find just breathtaking.

So it was an eye-opener to have a close encounter with Creative Master Northcord's equally stunning MPD. Sizewise, it's at the other end of the spectrum from the mighty Routemaster, at about 113mm long — yet the level of detail is as good. Unlike the Routemaster, you have to take a magnifying glass to see all the detail — it even has a tax disc. No, you can't read the issuing authority on it, but the magnifying glass showed how incredibly crisp all the legal lettering etc is, which my varifocals can't even make out, and confirms that there are separate lenses for the headlamps and direction indicators.

There's a clearly recognisable Greater

Manchester PTE notice alongside the doorway, and even the coolant sight glass at the rear is there. And the interior is also beautifully detailed, with proper little handpoles where once there would have been a bolt holding the thing together. The dot matrix destination displays are superbly picked out and fitted behind glass, even if their brightness is not such as to offend a certain octogenarian passenger not entirely unrelated to the reviewer who grumbles about Bluebird's over-bright destination displays.

Model buses have certainly moved into a new era, and whereas we were once stunned by the accuracy of early EFEs and OOCs compared with the Dinky Toys of our youth, Northcord has taken them on into a whole new generation.

STEPHEN MORRIS



traffic conditions that prevail in 2005. Take three examples. In 1939, the 12 ran between South Croydon and Park Royal; today, its termini are Dulwich and Oxford Circus. The 73 ran from Stoke Newington to Richmond in 1939; today it runs no farther south than Victoria. And the 88, which in 1939 worked a



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What next for Edinburgh?

Looking through the BBC website on 23 February, I noticed that a lot of the people expressing views about public transport in Edinburgh thought that it was too expensive and not good enough. This was, they claimed, the reason that they voted against the congestion charging proposals.

If it was only these 'no' voters who were criticising the services provided by Lothian and First, it would be bad enough; but some of the 'yes' voters also felt free to complain. Considering that Lothian Buses has recently been Bus Operator of the Year, there are superb services such as the new Fastlink guideway highlighted in the current *Buses Focus* and as a Ridacard costs less than £1 per day, I can only ask 'What do these people want from public transport?'

While I applaud Edinburgh City Council's efforts to do something about congestion, I fear that the responses to its plans may have set back the cause of public transport in the city. The question now must be 'what next?'. If anyone can come up with an answer to keep everyone happy, could they please let Lothian and First know. And if they have any spare time, perhaps they could also solve the Middle East problem.

Alistair Taylor
Andover, Hampshire

They don't help the cause

The cause of promoting public transport is done no favours at all by the extremism/out-and-out looniness of some of the more rabid rail supporters.

We all know the type. The ones who believe that anything that runs on rubber tyres (except, perhaps, bicycles) is an instrument of the devil and is quite happy to sit back and watch government funding being poured into propping up picturesque Thomas the Tank Engine branch lines at a rate of anything up to, according to a recent authoritative report, £9 a second.

As the great Roger Davies observed recently in these columns (You Write, February), these people have no interest in public transport. They're rail anoraks, pure and simple.

One could question how ethical it is to be happy to see government funding being poured into keeping nominally private rail companies afloat. And I wonder what any bus operator could do with similar amounts. Probably a sight more than four pokey little two-coach Sprinters a day.

Maybe we should disassociate ourselves from people and leave them to their romantic Ealing Studios fantasies.

Colin Jack
Weymouth

The Cambridge busway and the rail option

I agree with Mr Relton's comments about the excellence of the article on the proposed Cambridgeshire busway (You Write last month). He also, quite rightly, raises the issue of central government commitment to financing transport schemes. However, I am afraid he seems to have been misled about the possibilities of the reopening a heavy railway line between Huntingdon and Cambridge.

There is an impression locally that lorries outnumber cars on the A14. Particularly at peak periods of congestion, car numbers far outweigh those of heavy vehicles. Even should the Alconbury distribution development go ahead, the increase in the number of heavy vehicles on the A14 will not be significant.

Many of the existing lorry movements are between the Midlands/North and the East Coast. Existing rail lines, such as that via Peterborough and Ely, could cater for this traffic. Road haulage is seen as being more economic. It is extremely questionable whether this is correct when the costs imposed on other road users, including bus operators and passengers, by the many accidents caused by the heavy vehicles are taken into account.

Mr Relton speaks of Cast Iron, the proponent of the heavy rail scheme. Unfortunately one has to question that organisation's proposals, particularly in relation to costing. Those shown currently on its website are considerably lower than those included in a leaflet issued a year ago. I have sought to reconcile these figures with Cast Iron, without success.

The figures themselves are questionable when one looks at current heavy rail costs. Heavy rail provision could neither meet the aim of reducing road freight traffic to any extent nor offer a lower cost alternative to the guided bus. It is difficult to see how the new town at Northstowe, essential if those working in Cambridge are not compelled to commute longer distances, can be developed without bus provision.

John Holmes
St Ives, Cambridgeshire

Trolleybuses for London . . .

Thank you for all the trolleybus material, including letters, in the March issue.

Where Uxbridge Road is concerned I am pragmatic as to trams or trolleybuses. The important thing in my view is to continue the return of electric public transport to our streets. My own experiences of London's trolleybuses mirror Alan Townsin's almost exactly. Not only were they ultra reliable, but they were also such stately vehicles with a presence that really put motorbuses in the shade. There is every reason to suppose their possible successors would be likewise.

As to possible vehicle configuration, again I am pragmatic. However, I do take Alan's point regarding the capacity of double-deckers and the smaller amount of road space they occupy compared to articulated single-deckers.

Therefore how about, say, a 12m double decker based on the Alexander Dennis Enviro200H? Admittedly, the single rear tyres will probably necessitate three axles, but there are the alternatives of a powered rear bogie or

a twin-steer layout - as on unique Leyland X7 chassisless 1671 (DTD 649). Furthermore, since off-bus fare collection will almost surely apply, the scope for different layouts is almost endless.

I do, however, make one firm recommendation: traction batteries, please, for off-wire running. On earlier London trolleybuses, these fitted surprisingly neatly in the cab nearside. Auxiliary diesel alternators surely defeat the whole object of electric traction.

Tim Hall
London, SW15

. . . and for Leeds?

I do hope that your readership will by now have read the whole of Irvine Bell's letter (You Write, February) on the case for West London trolleybuses. But it does seem to me that in those first two paragraphs, he has stated the exact reason why West London Transit has not yet got off the ground.

Coincidentally, this also is why Leeds Supertram, after years of procrastination, has still not taken off — another proposition which I, as a Leeds resident, now believe to be dead in the ground.

Really, Leeds Supertram should have been up and running 10 years ago, and in many cities it certainly would have been. It has lost ground to Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham, London Docklands, Croydon, West Midlands, Tyne & Wear and possibly very shortly to Merseytram. This is really too much ground to lose.

Only time will tell whether Leeds Supertram will ever eventually take the hint and substitute those rubber-tyred electric vehicles with kerb guidance at stops and trolleybus-type overhead infrastructure and pick-up, of the type that Mr Bell describes. At the moment, this kind of vehicle is still very much in its infancy and may yet be just too unconventional.

Richard Parker
Pudsey

First in Suffolk and the cultural revolution

I was interested to read the article featuring David Leeder in February *Buses*. In my view, the revolution still has some way to go if the performance of First Eastern Counties in this part of the world is any criterion. I would mention the following as examples.

- The recruitment of a number of new drivers has resulted in cases where the driver becomes lost en route. As an example, I travelled on two journeys last November where the drivers became lost three times, having to ask passengers the way. To my mind, the solution to this problem is for the company to produce a laminated card with a map of the route on one side and directions on the other. New drivers on the route could be supplied with these cards, which would be consulted before setting out and also en route if they became lost.
- There should be a concerted effort to ensure that destination blinds are working, rather than having to resort to a paper route number stuck in the windscreen, still the case on some of the Volvo B6s here.
- Greater attempts at communication with customers must be made. When some major changes were made to routings in Felixstowe last autumn, notices of the fact that some early morning journeys were commencing a mile



First Berkshire SB64818 (M818 PGM), a Northern Counties Paladin-bodied Scania L113CRL, last October in Wokingham Road, Reading. It is one of the first older buses in the fleet to be painted in the now universal 'Barbie' livery. MARK LYONS

away from Felixstowe bus station (instead of at the bus station itself) were scrawled in Biro on a paper notice on a timetable case at the stop that was no longer to be served. In what has become the dire saga of reinstating the cinema bus shelter at Felixstowe, still to be replaced (at the time of writing) over two years after a First double-decker demolished it, local management did not even bother to reply to our letter, although the Norwich-based director has been more helpful.

• A better dialogue with users needs to be created. A layer of management, with whom we were developing a constructive relationship, was taken out about two years ago, but the company does not appear to have provided the supervisors on the ground with adequate training and this needs addressing.

First does have some good things going for it in this area. The success of Superoute 66, with its pioneering guided busway and a fleet of new Volvo B7TLs, plus some frequent and generally reliable inter-urban services operated with low-floor Scania single-deckers. But there is still much work to do and this association looks forward to its dialogue with management being renewed.

Bryan Frost
Chairman, Public Transport Committee,
East Suffolk Travellers' Association,
Felixstowe

First's print-out timings in Berkshire . . .

First's David Leeder may have been brave to go on the record in February *Buses*, knowing that he could be making himself a target for further complaints, but he needn't really say much, did he?

Sure, there was the tacit acknowledgement that some local management has been pretty poor, with Manchester and South Yorkshire getting specific mentions. But he didn't say what he was going to do to put this right. You can't expect drivers at every company to go on strike just so you can carry out basic maintenance.

The general impression given is that recruiting some staff from abroad and buying some new buses will solve all the problems. Not so, if my experience of First Berkshire is anything to go by. Manchester this is not. No high frequency, low fare, unashamedly poor quality services with life-expired Olympians around here. The vehicles are modern low-floor single-deckers, the services are infrequent and fares levels are high enough to make a Wilts & Dorset manager blush (or be envious). So all should be hunky-dory in the Home Counties. If only.

I've spent a proportion of the past five weeks or so trying to commute from Maidenhead to west Slough by bus. Not many do, and no wonder. During this time, I've been affected by or observed the following:

- One bus missed owing to departure from starting point 2min early.
- One bus departing 34min late and bunching with the following departure (remember that bunching on a half-hourly service means a gap of an hour).
- Another that left at least 3min early or more than 26min late (I went home to get the car rather than wait to find out).
- At least three more departures more than 15min late.
- Two examples of drivers failing to stop at bus stops for passengers who had rung the bell.
- Two examples of drivers failing to stop at stops for intending passengers who had made it clear they wished to join the bus.

Last week after arriving at work late two days in succession, I phoned the company to make my feelings known. Three days later the letter came back. Apparently, the £150,000 state-of-the-art Citaros have dodgy bells, so the poor hard-of-hearing drivers can't hear them. Funny that. Everyone else in the bus can. As for the 34min late departure, the on-board computer says it left on time, so that's that. I wonder if accusing your passengers of lying is in the manual on being proactive in handling marketing and customer relationships?

And you get all this for a fare of nearly £4 for a 10-mile round trip, even after purchase of a weekly or monthly ticket (there wasn't even any allowance made for the fact that no services ran on four days over Christmas/New Year). That's almost three times the cost of a similar journey in Oxford. Come on Stagecoach, where are you when you're wanted? In the meantime, it's back to my car.

Neil Gow
Maidenhead

. . . and in Berwickshire

I was interested to read in the article on FirstGroup that the matter of answering complaints adequately is to be addressed. This would seem to be an overdue measure.

On 30 November and again on 1 December I had occasion to write to First Edinburgh concerning the arrangements made to serve Berwick station by buses on Rail Link service 60 while current building works are in progress in the station forecourt.

A new driver had not been told where the replacement stop was located and as a result, on 30 November, three passengers who had

arrived from the south by train at 14.50 were left to wait almost two-and-a-half hours for the next bus to Galashiels. While writing, I mentioned that one bus I had used had run 7min early.

On 8 December I received a very short reply from one V. Hall, operations manager, addressing that last point only and ignoring the main concern. By some strange coincidence, it seemed that on 30 November, my watch, the church clock and the clocks at Berwick station were all 7min fast, but the computer printout generated by the on-board ticket machine was correct. He was unable to 'progress' my complaint any farther.

I replied to Mr Hall on 15 December pointing out that that was a minor matter and I would appreciate his comments on my main concern, the failure to ensure that rail connections were met. This is not simply a personal moan, as the Rail Link service is important to many visitors to this area and thus to the local economy. To date (31 January), I have heard nothing and I doubt if I will. I suspect that co-ordination with the services of other transport operators is of little importance to First management.

So all power to anyone who can effect a cultural revolution in the corridors of Carmuir House.

Brian Patton
Foulden Bastle, Berwickshire

Weaknesses of modern bus design

Along with Paul Davies (You Write last month), I also seriously question whether bus travel is progressing, although I think it is unfair to single out Newport Transport for criticism. The problems he describes are occurring all over the country.

The crux of the matter is this ill thought-out Disability Discrimination Act legislation, which is really just another bout of political correctness. I appreciate that this is a sensitive subject and I in no way wish to offend disabled people. Indeed my father is disabled. However, the fact is that here in London wheelchair users on buses are virtually non-existent.

The ever-increasing number of buggies being bought on to buses is causing immense problems and safety issues. And the reduced levels of seating mean that many elderly people, the very people who are supposed to benefit from low-floor buses, are being compelled to stand, which is surely totally unacceptable.

While the shiny new buses arriving in London may look impressive externally, once inside they leave a lot to be desired. At a time when we seem to be obsessed with health and safety legislation, how can it be acceptable to cram around 100 standing passengers into an articulated bus? How can it be acceptable to expect passengers to travel in baking hot buses with hopelessly inadequate ventilation in the heat of summer? Such extreme temperatures would be illegal in the workplace, but it seems that the safety of bus passengers is not important.

Car manufacturers have made great strides in recent years improving the comfort and safety of their products, while the bus industry seems to have gone in the reverse direction. If we really are serious about getting people out of their cars and on to buses, then we need to go back to the drawing board. Is it too much to expect that everyone gets a seat and enjoys a reasonable level of comfort?

Bill Dobbs
London, SE6

YOU WRITE Who is specifying the buses?

Let us take Mr Hoskin's ballistic passengers (You Write last month) and Mr Davies's unsteady pensioners. Add the latest two-pedal, two-speed control (foot to the floor acceleration and braking).

Next we will take Mr Kirby's all-or-nothing ventilation, cramped and board-like seats and finally the noise, vibration and harshness endemic on some buses. If you wonder about this latter point, then sit downstairs toward the rear of an Eclipse Gemini Volvo when it is stationary and the noise will deafen you, while the vibration and harshness will likely liquify your internal organs. We now have some idea why people are loath to leave their cars.

However, help is at hand. Trevor Roberts, Newport Transport managing director, suggests that it is our fault as we are not telling him what vehicles he should be buying. Pardon? Should he not be specifying to the manufacturers what buses will be acceptable to us, the much paying public?

Alan Carroll
Westbere, Kent

London 'going the wrong way'

For over 16 years, I have worked in the bus industry in London, from being a conductor to driver and promoted to inspector and manager. Over the past three years, I feel that the industry in London is going completely in the wrong direction.

London Transport was great in the 1960s. You never heard of assaults on staff, never saw etched windows, bus conductors went upstairs and the buses were made for the purpose. I feel we are now reversing commonsense and wasting money at large.

London still seems to have a driver shortage and some drivers' ability to drive the bus leaves something to be desired. I wouldn't recruit them.

The Disability Discrimination Act is tormenting the industry again and again. It's taking over. The Routemaster (and I won't drag on) should not leave our streets so prematurely. Transport for London thinks that we are all stupid. It cannot solely blame the DDA for the disappearance of these iconic landmarks. All the remaining London RM routes have overlapping low-floor buses on them, so the DDA passengers can use them, can't they?

It annoys me that over the past years TfL has bought RMs from private owners, to refurbish and put back in service. The RMs to date had another 10 years or more to survive. The only good things to come out of this are the heritage routes or 'Disney routes' as many of us call them.

People are now beginning to dislike the bendibuses. Maybe it's because they are being caught fare dodging. All Londoners who travel on the bendibuses believe that they are the easiest way to fare dodge. Peter Hendy of TfL thinks otherwise, but what will he know sitting in his office? They are a pain. If there are two of them in a row and you want the normal double-decker at the back, you have to run a mile to get to the bus.

Modern day buses are awful to drive. They have so many blindspots on them, from a driver's point of view, and are always breaking down. In my depot, we have WVLs — Wright-bodied Volvo double-deckers — and they are horrible to drive. The cabs are small, there are blindspots galore and so many buttons and alarms. You have fewer to start a Boeing 747.

In 20 years from now, can you see one preserved in a bus rally? I think not. The most

annoying thing on them is the automatic roller operation of the destination blinds. As they are going round to the destination you require, you might be lucky enough to have all the same details around the bus. Why can't manufacturers leave things be? If it isn't broken, don't change it. The human hand turning a metal handle is cheap, effective, low maintenance and doesn't go wrong. High levels of technology on buses serving high mileages in London don't go together.

Sorry to whinge, but yes these buses look good at rallies and in magazines, but on the streets of London as a bus doing its job? No. So please if there are any bus manufacturers reading this, operations directors, Peter Hendy, Ken Livingstone, please think about what I have said. Thanks.

Paul Jeffries
Northfleet, Kent

Fare dodging on bendies

Transport for London is certainly not looking in the right place (In London last month) because passengers without valid tickets are commonplace on London's articulated bus routes. Most are fare dodgers, but some are passengers who are just totally confused by the whole system.

I recently witnessed a ticket inspection on route 73 and at least seven passengers were without valid tickets although none appeared to be fare dodgers. Two well-dressed ladies explained that they had tried to purchase tickets from four different roadside ticket machines without success (they are notoriously unreliable). They had informed the driver when they got on but of course he is unable to accept cash.

Another passenger said he hadn't been aware that his fare had increased from £1 to £1.20 and didn't have the correct change (the machines don't give change) and four foreign tourists were totally baffled as to why there was no conductor on the bus collecting fares. None of these people was issued with penalty fare notices and as the bus started to fill up, the two revenue inspectors got off having checked less than half the bus.

These buses are a dream come true for fare dodgers with little chance of encountering a ticket inspection and in any case without police back-up there is little that revenue inspectors can do if a fare dodger refuses to co-operate and tells them where to stick their £10 penalty fare. The police, of course, have more important priorities than checking bus tickets. The fact that these buses are often choc-a-bloc full means that ticket inspections are often physically impossible anyway.

It is common knowledge in many parts of London that these buses offer free travel and we can only guess at how many people who used to buy bus passes have stopped doing so because they can now travel for free. No doubt the recent fare increase was necessary to offset these losses and it is about time that TfL woke up to the fact that this ridiculous open boarding system is not going to work.

George Manning
Beckenham, Kent

Just on the fringes?

Bernie Waters of Town & Country Travel (You Write last month) suggests that I write my Fleet News and other contributions to *Buses* while sitting 'on the very fringes of the industry'.



To set the record straight, he might like to know that I first conducted a bus in 1975, learnt to drive from scratch in Southend Transport's psv school from provisional status and passed my psv test, age 22, in 1977. I then worked with Southend Transport (see picture above) as conductor, conductor trainer, driver, opo driver, traffic control, traffic admin and Travelcard office. Subsequently, I was marketing and coaching manager at National Crusader and traffic manager at Supreme Travel and have also been a part-time driver at Southend Transport. I also bought my own bus, an ex-Guernsey, Watson's Greys, Albion Victor FT39AN, which I restored with help from others.

John G. Lidstone
Shoeburyness

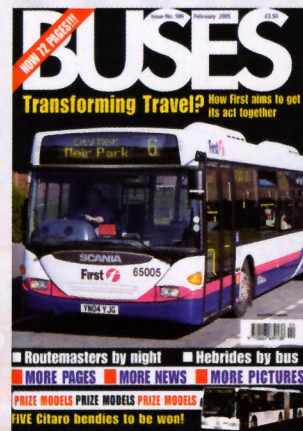
The truth about Noo Noo Shimano

I have no idea who started this thing about Glenvale Transport Dennis Dart K708 PCN *Noo Noo Shimano* being named after the Teletubbies' singing Hoover, but that is incorrect. It is in fact named after a driver's cats, Noo Noo and Shimano.

Karl Sutton
Liverpool

These are letters pages and the views expressed therein are purely the views of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or publisher of *BUSES*.

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BUSES

NEW BUS BOOKS FROM IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING AND MIDLAND PUBLISHING

April Titles

London's Trams

A VIEW FROM THE PAST



PAUL COLLINS

Re-printed

LONDON'S TRAMS: A VIEW FROM THE PAST

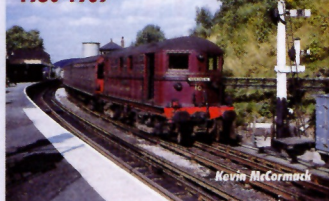
Paul Collins

ISBN: 0 7110 2741 2 HB

235mm x 172mm 96pp £15.99

This book features all the tramways inherited by the London Transport Passenger Board in 1933 in a fascinating collection of over 150 black and white photographs which recall many different aspects of London's tramway history including the change pits, service vehicles, the Kingsway Subway and much else.

LONDON TRANSPORT in Colour 1950-1969



Kevin McCormack

LONDON TRANSPORT IN COLOUR

1950 - 1969 K McCormack

ISBN: 0 7110 3073 1 HB

184mm x 240mm 80pp £14.99

In over 80, mostly unpublished, colour illustrations, the author explores London Transport's surface and underground operations in these momentous years which saw the withdrawal of the trams and trolleybuses, the introduction of the Routemaster and the opening of the Victoria line, among many other topics.

New!



East Kent

GLORY DAYS: EAST KENT

Glyn Kraemer-Johnson & John Bishop

ISBN: 0 7110 3030 8 HB

184mm x 240mm 80pp £16.99

The book provides a detailed narrative of the company's history, operations and vehicles, from its formation in 1916 through to its becoming part of the National Bus Company in the late 1960s. Like the other titles in the successful 'Glory Days' series, it is illustrated with colour and black and white photographs throughout.

New!

March Titles

Buses Restored 2005



Compiled in association with the National Association of Road Transport Museums

BUSES RESTORED 2005 NARTM

ISBN: 0 7110 3089 8 PB

235mm x 172mm 128pp £13.99

Compiled by the National Association of Road Transport Museums, this is a the definitive annual guide to the many road transport museums throughout the British Isles. New features of the completely revised 2005 edition are colour photographs throughout for the first time and a more comprehensive list of vehicles preserved, but not in collections, produced in conjunction with the British Bus Preservation Group.



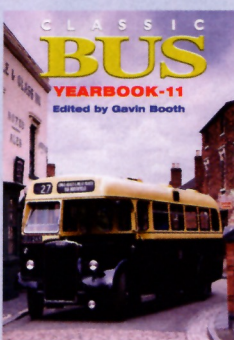
RIBBLE

GLORY DAYS: RIBBLE

R Davies ISBN: 0 7110 3038 3 HB

184mm x 240mm 96pp £16.99

A comprehensive account of a fondly remembered company, its operations and vehicles, over a near 60-year period from its earliest days through to its amalgamation into the NBC in the 1970s. Including many colour and monochrome illustrations and a range of memorabilia from Ribble's golden years.



CLASSIC BUS YEARBOOK-11

Edited by Gavin Booth

CLASSIC BUS YEARBOOK 11

Edited by Gavin Booth

ISBN: 0 7110 3055 3 PB

235mm x 172mm 128pp £14.99

Many road transport enthusiasts look forward eagerly each Spring to the publication of the latest edition of this popular annual excursion into the world of the half-cab bus. The new edition contains, as always, a wealth of fascinating articles and features and is packed with nostalgic photographs.

Ian Allan
PUBLISHING

MIDLAND

Available

London Transport

In the 1950s



Michael H. C. Baker

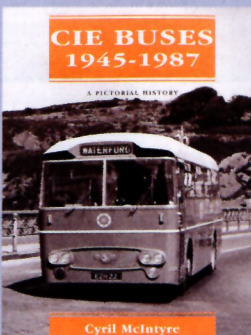
LONDON TRANSPORT IN THE 1950s

Michael H C Baker

ISBN: 0 7110 3009 X HB

235mm x 172mm 96pp £15.99

A detailed examination of a fascinating decade for public transport in London which saw the end of the trams and the beginning of the end for the trolleybuses. This was the era of the RT and the RF and the start of the Routemaster's glorious reign. This highly illustrated volume, will be sought after by all London Transport enthusiasts.



CIE BUSES 1945-1987

A PICTORIAL HISTORY

Cyril McIntyre

CIE BUSES 1945 - 1987

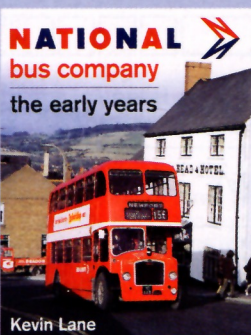
C McIntyre

ISBN: 1 85780 192 X PB

282mm x 213mm 96pp £14.99

This pictorial history of the buses operated by CIE from its formation in 1945 focuses on the company's close relationship with Leyland over a forty year period. The book charts the development of the CIE fleet over these years examining the vehicles employed on city, provincial and schools services. Starting with the buses inherited by CIE in 1945, it deals with the evolution of the fleet in a chronological sequence, up to the change in acquisition policy, which saw the arrival of the unloved Bombardier buses of the 1980s.

To win copies of this title,
see the competition on page 30!



NATIONAL bus company the early years

Kevin Lane

NATIONAL BUS COMPANY: THE EARLY YEARS

Kevin Lane

ISBN: 0 7110 3023 5 HB

280mm x 215mm 96pp £16.99

This book explores a fascinating phase in the history of the British bus and coach industry which is of great interest to many bus enthusiasts. The constituent companies which formed the NBC, their liveries and operations, are first discussed. The author then shows how, gradually at first, the impact of nationalisation came to be felt across the country, with old identities being submerged as the process of centralised design and bus and coach acquisition got under way.

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SERVICE EXTRA

JULIAN OSBORNE looks at some of the little things that sometimes become big annoyances to bus passengers

Many will tell you that little things don't matter and that it's the big picture that does. Certainly, many bus industry folk have said that over the years.

Rear blinds? A little thing. Not important. Front blinds? Little thing etc, etc. I hear that Virgin's Cross-Country train people are trying to deflect complaints about the onboard gizmos (with which they promote the service) not working because they are 'little things' compared to their main challenge of providing a train at all.

Certainly, it would be silly to get worked up over the odd small thing. But what if there's lots of them? One coach in the garage with its clock wrong is fair enough, but the entire fleet is another matter and that becomes a big thing. And it's often the little things that drive big decisions, like abandoning public transport. So here are some recent little annoyances.

Unhelpful attitudes to timekeeping

Drivers ambling up well after departure time or, as on a recent occasion, no one being able to board because another driver was trying to set up a shift swap with our driver. We left late as a result. What was most irritating about this was that the one seeking the swap conducted the whole exchange as though the waiting queue wasn't there.

On another occasion, a controller organised by radio for a customer to retrieve some lost property 10min after the bus's departure time, even though said person was clearly available earlier. There is a time when some drivers suddenly get very precise about timekeeping. Last October, a connecting bus pulled away as we entered the bus station 2min late and arrived beside it. I'm led to believe that some managers encourage this because the traffic commissioners or the local authority will penalise them if they run late. Waiting in vain maybe, but when the other bus is alongside?

Buses that are not full passing stops or offloading but not picking up 'because they're full'

A different approach that played well with the people denied boarding — and, indeed, those on board — was a driver with standees but not full, who took the trouble to stop at a stop where no one wanted to alight. Why did he do this? To advise the folk waiting that a much emptier bus was 'one stop behind'.

Drivers not telling us stuff

Unexplained waits or crews silently wandering off. On the plus side, I've had explanations



Above: Are uninformative front blinds little things or big annoyances? This is First Wyvern Leyland Lynx 62705 (G105 HNP) when it still carried Midland Red West fleetnumber 1105 and appeared to be destined for a place called 'First f'. **LUKE GOTTARD**

and apologies from some and these quite consistently from London United drivers who often explain that a crew change is to take place or make other announcements. One recently told us he was in danger of running early and would have to wait up for a couple of minutes.

Histrionic door closing during crew changeover

I'm standing waiting. I'm not trying to get on, yet arriving driver closes the door carefully behind him and departing driver does similarly 2min later. The new driver is perfectly civil when he does open the doors and throughout the journey. At the same spot a few months earlier, three of us were invited to 'come in out of the rain' by a driver as he set up his machine.

Half-baked use of IT

I spoke of Traveline's unreliable timetables last time. One feature that persists is the inability of some systems to remove old times when new ones are added so that you see apparently much more frequent services than they really are. I usually now establish the operator via Traveline and then refer to the operators' own websites, most of which are good now.

Also under this heading are real time information schemes where customers are led to believe that timetable data is real time information. In one scheme I know well, there is a mix of minutes to arrival (which is actual global positioning satellite data from the bus) and timetable times that are just that. Letters to the paper and my personal experience show that few folk understand the difference but nowhere is it explained adequately. In contrast would be a really good real time

system like, and you know what I'm going to say but it's still true: Brighton.

Late buses and coaches not using initiative to catch up time

I'm told that drivers can't have more discretion to vary routes or run light to catch up schedule on roads served by other services because it would be 'open to abuse' and upset the traffic commissioners. But most of the complaints I've listed above result from systems being abused, so why not find a way of letting the majority who don't take advantage have the opportunity of occasionally helping passengers in this way?

What unites us all

The big thing uniting all of those is treating us customers with respect. Some may be in partial conflict with others but — hey! — we're the customers. In some cases, more management intervention might seem appropriate whereas, in others, less of it might make more sense. Such changes could reduce the little things that annoy customers and give the majority of drivers who provide consistent, friendly and reliable service more recognition.

On that score, I should apologise for some wording in the December 'Service Extra'. Usually, I blame the editor for these but I find that the description of our favourite local driver's manner as 'usually friendly' went through every draft without my noticing — it should have said her usual friendly manner. Most such errors result from turning sentences around during attempts to use fewer words. That was how we managed to suggest in the Brighton GPS article (May 2003) that bus control would never be an *inexact* science. Sorry about that, too.



PUBLICITY MATTERS

Regular bus user and Transport 2000 member TERRY KIRBY examines the level of information available in and around Leicestershire

Like most other British local authorities, Leicester and Leicestershire now have a bus information strategy that sets out minimum standards of information and how they can be accessed. It is a rolling document, which should be revised regularly, so I set out to check information standards in the area in printed form — where they were available and how accurate they were.

To begin, Leicester itself has separate travel centres for Arriva and First and information on any other operator's service is almost impossible to obtain in the city centre.

The tourist information centre gave me photocopied maps of both operators' networks, though both of these were slightly out of date. It didn't stock many bus timetables as 'they keep changing all the time', according to the staff member I spoke to. I was referred to the travel centres and Traveline.

I had a similar response at Loughborough tourist information centre, but it didn't even have any route maps. I thought these places were supposed to be able to help in such matters.

After a lot of lobbying on my part, there is now a good stock of timetable leaflets at St Margaret's bus station in Leicester, but that is too far from the city centre for many people. A multi-operator travel centre is needed in the main shopping area, near the Haymarket Centre.

Bus service information at Leicester railway station is much better than it was (a few years ago there was none), but it still needs to be made much more prominent. People leaving trains walk right past the display without knowing it's there.

Operators seem unconvinced

Bus stop timetable displays are getting much better now, in quality and quantity, but there is still a long way to go. I speak to bus operators regularly and they don't employ enough people to do a proper, thorough publicity job. They seem to need convincing of the commercial benefits of employing more publicity staff.

Having checked many libraries, information centres and bus stops around the city and county, the situation is still patchy, although it is improving. When asked for a timetable, many library staff ask me where I want to go before going into a box file or drawer and pulling out a leaflet. What if I was a visitor and don't know where to go? And if there is no display, how will people know that they can find out such details? This sort of thing could be sorted out easily, quickly and cheaply if the will existed to do so.

For many years, neither Leicester nor Leicestershire has produced comprehensive booklets — unlike neighbouring Warwickshire and Derbyshire — so it is necessary to obtain leaflets for each individual route. This can be off-putting, as is the fact that it is difficult to tell if each timetable is up-to-date, as there is no information on closing dates for such services on timetables.

Leicestershire has now adopted a voluntary agreement where major changes normally take place on the first Monday of each new school term. Why don't timetables mention this and say, for example, 'please ring 0870 608 2 608 nearer this to confirm any changes'? That would be a big help.

I believe that improvements to the overall standard of publicity in this area could be carried out at minimal cost and that they would generate extra revenue. They would, in effect, be self-financing and a real help in implementing the bus information strategy.

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (we want to hear about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Glasgow address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to alan@millar1.demon.co.uk.



PRESERVATION UPDATE

Dates for North Weald, Slough and Edinburgh events

As several eagle-eyed readers spotted, a few key dates were printed incorrectly in Part 1 of our Rally Calendar & Museum Guide published with last month's *Buses*. These included the North Weald and Southend rallies, the new running day in Slough and Windsor, the Hertford & Stevenage running day, the Edinburgh Festival of Transport and the Totally Transport event in Blackpool.

We apologise for any confusion this may have caused and for the concerned phone calls that some of the organisers have had to field. We have taken the precaution of repeating — and correcting — the information for events from 28 May to 26 June in Part 2 of the Rally Calendar, which is enclosed within this magazine.

To clarify matters, the correct date for the Slough and Windsor Running Day, based at Slough bus station, is **Sunday 17 April**. The Edinburgh Festival of Transport is on **Sunday 29 May**.

Below: The Southend Bus & Transport Show will be held on **Sunday 5 June** and the North Weald Rally on **Sunday 26 June**. Immaculately preserved Southend Transport AEC Routemaster 122 (VLT 44) — originally London Transport RM44 — was among the 200 entries at last year's North Weald rally. **DARREN FORD**



Below: Part of the fun of the Hertford & Stevenage running day on **Sunday 5 June** will be the recreation of old routes. In June last year, Country Bus Rallies operated ex-London Transport Guy Specials, including GS2 (MXX 302) on the 329/A between Hertford and Hitchin, including the 329A section along narrow Swangley's Farm Road out of Knebworth towards Datchworth. **IAN SMITH**



The following events are on **Sunday 5 June**: Southend Bus & Transport Show; Stroud Classic Bus Running Day; Hertford & Stevenage Classic Bus Running Day; vintage bus service operating from Medstead & Four Marks station on the Mid-Hants Railway; Transport Enthusiasts' Fair at Lemsford Hall, Brocket Road, Lemsford, Herts.

And the following events are on **Sunday 26 June**: North Weald Rally and Bazaar; Sheffield Festival of Transport; Sandtoft Trolleybus Museum Trolley Day with connecting bus from Doncaster; Emergency Vehicles Day at Crich Tramway Village; Banbury Steam & Vintage Vehicle Rally, Bloxham, Oxfordshire; Totally Transport 2005, South Promenade, Blackpool. Full contact details are in this month's Rally Calendar.

The North London Transport Society also asks us to point out that the closing dates for entries to the popular North Weald event are as given this month, not as last month. For more information on the event, send a stamped addressed envelope to NLTS, 132 Moorfield, Harlow, Essex, CM18 7QQ.

News received after the Rally Calendar went off for printing is that Blue Triangle will operate routes from North Weald to Epping, Ongar and Toot Hill on 26 June. These will be registered services as last year with fares collected by conductors on board. Fares will be £3 adult day rovers, accompanied children free.

There will also be a tour bus, 718, from Victoria at 10.00, picking up to Finsbury Park station then non-stop to North Weald. Tour bus fare will be £5 adult return, £7 with day rover ticket. Look out for advertisements in future issues of *Buses*.

One other point to clarify, in view of the other confusion, is that the date published last month for the NLTS's running day at Theydon Bois is **correct**. It is definitely on **Saturday 21 May**.

Below: Among the considerable number of preserved buses at last year's Hertford & Stevenage event was London Transport Country Area AEC Regal T792 (HLX 462), seen at the Baker Arms, Bayford, while operating between Little Berkhamstead and Hertford on route 308. **IAN SMITH**



CHANGED DATE FOR WARMINSTER EVENT

The date for this year's Warminster & West Wilts running day has been changed.

As we reported last month, the organisers planned to hold this on **Sunday 16 October**, but have changed it to **Sunday 23 October** to avoid a clash with the Isle of Wight Bus Museum's annual running day.

There also has been a change of plan for next year's Friends of King Alfred Buses running day at Winchester. FoKAB was originally going to hold this on **Monday 2 January** rather than New Year's Day, as it wanted to retain the use of church premises for part of the event. However, it is making alternative arrangements that will allow it to stick to the traditional date, **Sunday 1 January**, as listed in this month's Rally Calendar.

English and Welsh reports (no photographs) should be sent to: **John G. Lidstone, 15 Beach Court, Rampart Street, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9AF**, marking your envelope 'Fleet News') E-mail text messages (no attachments or photographs, please) to: fleetnews@lineone.net.

IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva the Shires orders accessible coaches**
- **Blue Bus sells routes to South Lancs**
- **Stagecoach splits South Midlands**
- **Last orders for Yellow Buses**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in *italic type* (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VL7 48*), with the most recent given first.

A1, Skelmersdale

Iveco 49.10/Carlisle B25F G729 WJU from Philips, Holywell is in use.

Abbey Cars, Abbeydore, Herefordshire

New is Optare Solo SlimLine M920/B29F YJ54 UWZ for Herefordshire-supported services 441 (Longtown-Hereford), 442 (Ewyas Harold-Abergavenny) and 388 (Hereford-Cheltenham).

Abbey, High Wycombe

Dennis Dominator/Alexander RL-type H45/34F FGE 430X has been acquired from Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet. It was originally Central SMT D30. Also acquired are MCW Metrobuses B67 WUL, C436 BUV.

Ace Travel, Aintree

AEC Routemaster SMK 723F has been acquired via Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet, while other acquisitions are MCW Metrobuses G106/20 FJW, Metrobus MkII F772 EKM, ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian C208 GTU, Dennis Dominator/East Lancs CLV 41X and Leyland Leopard/Duple 479 BOC.

Airparks, Luton Airport

Noted in use here is Optare Solo M850 KS03 EXL.

Alpine, Llandudno

Further ex-Yorkshire Traction ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians are JWR 137Y (*SHE 616Y*) and SHE 618Y. Former Crosville Bristol VRT/SL3s still at work early in

Right: This was the spectacular scene on 9 February when Arriva Southend Dennis Dart 3424 (P424 HVX) caught fire following an apparent electrical fault. Despite the smoke and flames, damage to the Plaxton Pointer body is apparently only superficial.

MARTIN DALTON

2005 were JMB 406T, PCA 419/25V, WTU 499W and YMB 503/16/7W, but the first Olympian withdrawn is WDC 219Y after mechanical failure.

Ambassador, Great Yarmouth

New for National Express work are Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12Bs FD54 DGU/V, DHY/X.

Amber-Lee, Northfleet

Additions to the fleet are MCW Metrobuses ORJ 72W, GOG 138W, latterly with ASD, Strood.

Ann's, Kerswell Green, Worcestershire

Leyland Titan KYV 452X is here, acquired from Williams, Lower Tumble, whose light blue and cream it retains.

Appleby, Conisholme

Van Hool-bodied Scania E562 FFW passed to Ausden Clarke, Leicester, re-registered LIL 2174, joined by Plaxton-bodied Scania XJV 146, now D141 DCT.

Armstrong, Gilsland, Northumberland

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah C33F YN04 WTA is in use.

Arriva Cymru AA

The first of the VDL SB200/Wright Commanders are 2504-8 (CX54 EPJ-L/N/O) for the X32 (Aberystwyth-Bangor). 2509-13 are due for service 94 (Wrexham-Barmouth). Leyland Olympians 3047/65 (A147 OFR, B965 WRN) have gone to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Arriva Derby AA

The remaining Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties, 4301 (GTO 301V), has been repainted in schoolbus yellow.

Arriva London AA

New are Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 H45/20D VLA87-93/5-101 (LJ54 BDE/F/O/U/V/X/Y, BBV/X/Z, BCE/F/K/O) and Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B27D PDL95-111 (LJ54 BCX, BAA/O/U/V, BBE/F/K/N/O/U, LHF-H/K-M).

The articulated Scania OmniCity demonstrator, OM1 (YN54 ALO), returned to Scania in December.

AEC Routemaster RML2525 (JJD 525D) is back in service, replacing cannibalised RML2692 (SMK 692F). RM1125 (KGH 858A, 125 CLT) has gone to PVS, Barnsley (dealer), RML2294 (CUV 294C), RML2372, 2510 (JJD 372, 510D), RML2643/58 (NML 643/58E) and RML2746 (SMK 746F) to Ensign, Purfleet, which has also taken MCW Metrobuses M143, 304/10/4/51 (BYX 143, 304/10/4V, GYE 351W) from **The Original London Sightseeing Tour**.

Arriva Midlands AA

More new Optare Solos delivered are FJ54 OTV/W, noted in Shropshire County Council's dark blue but devoid of fleetnumbers at Cannock in late-December.

Mercedes-Benz Varios 1128/38 (R128/38 LNR) have passed to Dunn-Line via Stafford Bus Centre, with 1127 (R127 LNR) expected to follow.

Arriva North East AA

Alexander Dennis Enviro300 demonstrator PO54 NNM was in use at Durham until 31 December and went on to Gardiner, Spennymoor.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4105 (H267 CFT) is back in service after accident damage repairs, but MAN 11.190/Optare Vectas 1534/7 (L534/7 FHN) have suffered damage, 1537 (L537 FHN) in high winds on 8 January. DAF SB220GS/Ikarus 4077 (T78 AJA) has been given a modified Plaxton lower front end.

Optare MetroRider 876 (M876 LBB) is being cannibalised at Stockton, 2606 (P606 FHN) is set aside



for disposal and 2729/37 (M443 HPF, M453 HPG) are in reserve. MCW Metrobus 959 (KYV 734X), DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4004, 4104 (G212 HCP, H266 CFT) ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 7214/67, 7301 (WFC 214Y, A567 NWX, C263 XEF) are being cannibalised. Reserve MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta 1558 (K140 RYS) is being repaired. Metrobus 963 (KYO 610X) is stored at Hexham, which has 625 (C354 BUV) for schools. Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 218 (F189 HKK) is out of use at Alnwick.

Arriva North West AA

It is planned to convert the entire Liverpool fleet to low-floor buses by 2008 and the whole of Merseyside by 2011, with an investment worth £11 million.

Six new Optare Solos are due for Merseytravel work as 651-6 (MX54 YZR/T-W/Y). The VDL SB120/Wright Cadet B39F for AirLink service 89A (St Helens-John Lennon Airport) are 2489-96 (CK54 DKD-F/J-L/N/O). Crewe is using 2497/8, 2500-3 (CX54 DKU/V, DLD/F/J/K) on service 84 (Crewe-Chester).

A new depot has opened at Gow End Lane in Lyme Green to operate Macclesfield town services 1-6, 9-11, 14 and 21. Manchester now operates service 130 (Macclesfield-Manchester) while Wythenshawe runs 390/392 (Macclesfield-Stockport).

Trafford Metro route-branding has been added to Dennis Dart/Marshall 7615/6 (T615/6 PNC).

Birkenhead's Volvo Olympian 3304 (N304 CLV) has been extensively damaged after careering out of control across the entrance to Birkenhead bus station and may be withdrawn. 3301 (N301 CLV) has been refurbished and retrimmed at Bootle. 3307 (N307 CLV) has a new Hanover LED electronic destination display.

Rail replacement Leyland Olympian/ECW 3122 (C212 GTU) was used in normal service at Bootle in January. Odder still was the use of open-top Leyland Atlantean 3981 (GKA 449L) on service 49 (Southport-Woodvale) on 21 December, to avoid loss of the journey despite an acute vehicle shortage.

DAF SB220/Ikarus Citibus 1793 (K133 TCP) has been re-registered K250 CBA.

Leyland Lynxes 1746/8/9 (G319 HNW, H408 YMA, G329 NUM) have, as expected, been withdrawn. Leyland Olympian 3062 (B962 WRN) has been sold to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer). The ex-Merseyline Leyland Titans sold to MASS, North Anston were 3954-7/9 (A862/5 SUL, A903/4/34 SYE) while 3958 (A910 SYE) passed to a preservationist in Warrington and 3951-3 (CUL 72V, KYV 357, 478X) have gone for scrap.

Arriva Southend AA

By mid-February, Dennis Tridents 5442/3/51 (W442 XKX) etc were still on strength.

All-Leyland Olympian 5404 (H264 GEV) has been refurbished, with 5405 (H265 GEV) expected to follow.

Grays-based Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 3424 (P424 HVX) caught fire on a schools duty on 9 February, apparently following an electrical fault.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 3350 (J317 XVX) and Plaxton-bodied 3373 (K323 CVX) passed to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) in February, Carlyle-bodied 3092 (H923 LOX) and Wright-bodied 3349 (J316 XVX) have also been sold.

Southend Council has withdrawn all funding for supported services, threatening 12 routes operated by Arriva and First.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

An arrival is East Sussex County Council Optare Solo M850/B25F YN53 ELU, carrying council number B450.

Former Southend Dennis Trident E5435 (W435 XKX) wears a non-standard black Arriva fleetname toward the rear. Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D/Plaxton B25F E2382 (R952 VPU) has returned from Colchester to Kent Thameside.

Leyland Lynx driver trainer YDT48 (F48 ENF) has been transferred to Arriva Midlands at Cannock. MCW Metrobus 5882 (FKM 882V) has been exported to Hungary for use as an extension to a McDonald's restaurant at Tatabanya. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 3165/6/71 (J465 MKL, K466 OKP, K471 SKO) went to Arriva Yorkshire while 3170 (K170 SKO) and driver trainers Mercedes-Benz 609D YFB72 (G72 PKR) and Iveco YFB724 (L724 PHK) have been sold. Driver trainer Dennis Dart YDT307 (J307 WHJ) and Volvo Citybus 7642 (G642 BPH) went to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

Five wheelchair accessible VDL SB4000+/Van Hool Alicon coaches have been ordered.

LOTS kindly gives details of the vehicles transferred from Sovereign Bus & Coach on 23 January. They retain their Sovereign fleetnumbers in the short term and are: Volvo B10B/Wright DP49F 101-5 (M101-5 UKX) and DP47F 169-72 (R369-72 TWR), Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown DP47F 124 (R524 TWR), B47F 128/9/31-4/6-8

(W128 XRO) and DP44F 140-5 (PN02 HVS/L/M/O/R/P); Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton B31F 455/6 (M455/6 UUR), TransBus Pointer Dart/B37F 505-9 (KC03 PGE/F, KE54 GPK/O/U) and B29F Mini Pointer Darts 584/5 (KE53 KBO/P), Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader B38F 601-4/6-8 (P601 RGS, R602-4/6/7 WMJ, R608 CNM), Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Interurbans 701/5/49/59 (M101 CCD, L105 SDY, L149 BFF, L159 CCW), which are B60F except 701, DP47F; and Volvo B10M/Alexander DP48F 934/82/3 (M234 TBV, M782/3 PRS). Also, Volvo B10M/Plaxton C53F 301/2/16-8 (KE51 WUO/P, P316-8 RGS) are on loan.

A Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F from Arriva Yorkshire is 5171 (CWR 524Y).

Dennis Darts 3357/9 (K407/9 FHJ) are in a dark green and white livery for a new park-&-ride service at Bishops Stortford. Destination blinds have been removed and the glass area painted with advertising for the service. Leyland Olympian 5153 wears a red/yellow overall advertisement for Watford First, having previously worn the same colours for 'Watford's Driving Force', employment agency.

Withdrawn are Dennis Dart/Wright Handybuses 3375 (K762 JVX) and 3817 (H367 XGC), while Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount coach 4020 (SIB 7480 E325 OMG) has been sold for scrap.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

Leyland Olympian 524 (CWR 524Y) has passed to Arriva the Shires & Essex.

Aughton, Ormskirk

Leyland Olympian TSO 31X has been sold to Stephenson, Rochford (dealer).

ASD, Strood, Kent

Leyland Olympian/ECW C113 CHM has been acquired via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, while MCW Metrobuses ORJ 72W, GOG 138W have gone to Amber-Lee.

Ausden Clark, Cossington, Leicester

A 10th Scania N113DRB double-decker in this fleet is ex-Brighton & Hove G722 RYJ, with East Lancs body.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Dennis Lance SLF/Berkhof B37D M185/91 UAN ousted Marshall-bodied MANs N130/5 XEG to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Aztechbird, Guiseley, W Yorks

Optare L834 MWT was offered for sale via auction in Manchester. Mercedes Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver T982 OGA has passed to Vale, Manchester.

Banga, Wolverhampton

Former Bluebird, Middleton, Iveco K2 BLU is acquired.

Banstead Coaches

Latest addition to this long established Surrey fleet is Select-registered CH05 BAN, a Caetano-bodied Mercedes-Benz Touro.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre

The six new Volvo/Jonckheere Mistral Expressliners (CN54 HFE-K) are confirmed as the rear-engined B12B.

Belle Vue, Gorton

Two more new Irisbus Scolabus/Vehixel schoolbuses for Greater Manchester PTE contracts are FD54 EMX, ENC.

Birmingham Motor Traction, Four Oaks

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart V332 CVV is on hire from Dawsonrentals.

BL Travel, Royston, S Yorks

Acquired is Optare MetroRider MR07/B25F J608 SJB from Black Prince, Morley. Mercedes-Benz 709D G166 PRA has passed to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Blackpool Transport

The Optare Excels from Go North East are for the low-floor conversion of Line 7 and will be numbered 219-21 (T880/1/4 RBR). They are being fitted with powered wheelchair ramps before entering service. Optare Solo 273 (V273 HEC) has been repainted in pool livery.

The launch of Line 15 (Meriside Tesco-Poulton) in November led to the repainting of the oldest four Optare MetroRiders in pink/yellow.

Black Prince, Morley

B40F-seated BMC Falcon demonstrator YN54 VLE was on loan late last year. The last Christmas decorated bus, Scania N113DRB/Alexander 821 (J821 HMC), was back in standard red/yellow livery in January.

Optare MetroRider 608 (J608 SJB) has gone to B-Line, Royston. Scania N112DRB/Marshall C28 ETG is with Ausden Clarke, Leicester.

Blue Bus, Bolton

The new garage opened in Eccles during January and expansion of operations began on 31 January with the start of eight Greater Manchester PTE tendered routes. Indeed it's a time of change all round, as the Appley Bridge outstation in Wigan passed to South Lancs Travel on 26 February, along with some Wigan-area services and Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts W12 BLU, X13 LUE and X14 BLU.

Dennis Lance/Alexander 181/94/6 (J101/14/6 WSC) were back in use in January. Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger 62 (G902 JBB) passed to Focus, Much Hoole.

Bluebird, Middleton

Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart MX54 BLU is new. Iveco 59.12/Marshall R19 BLU has passed to Bain, Oldmeldrum, Wright-bodied Dennis Darts R484 GNB (R1 BLU) and P30, 50 BLU to Tanner, St Helens,

Blue Triangle, Rainham

A yard at Ferry Lane previously used by Cleanaway for its Havering Council contract has been acquired.

Withdrawn MCW Metrobuses GYE 463W, A932 SUL and C341 BUV; Leyland Titans WYV 4, 11, 28T, B94 WUV and unused B120 WUV are stored there along with privately owned ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL2 GNG 710N.

Bon Chance, Pilling, Lancs

This operator has acquired rare Dennis Dorchester/Duple C53F CIW 708 from Davies, Pontybodkin.

Brown, Ely

Former Go North East MCW Metrobus/H46/31F A628/30 BCN have been acquired.

Brighton & Hove GA

The first 05-registered deliveries recorded are the first two of the next batch of eight Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs H47/32F, 647/8 (YN05 GZK/M), named *Ernest F. Beal* and *Jimmy Edwards* respectively,

continued overleaf...

Below: CH05 BAN, the new Mercedes-Benz Touro for Banstead Coaches, awaiting delivery from the EvoBus dealership in Coventry in February. TONY HUNTER





Above: YJ54 CEN, one of the latest quintet of Wright Commander-bodied VDL SB200s for Claribel, Birmingham. This operator took delivery of the first Commander. **TONY HUNTER**

and Scania K114IB/Irizar Century C49Ft 510 (YN05 GZS). The rest of the OmniDekkas will be 649-54 for route 49, named respectively *Adam Faith*, *Prince Petr Kropotkin*, *John Langridge*, *Sir William Nicholson*, *James Osborne* and *Jack Solomons*.

Silver-liveried H47/33F OmniDekka demonstrator YN54 OBX has been on loan, numbered 54, while East Lancs modified other vehicles.

Brylaine, Boston

Leyland Lynx 2 XAZ 1293 (H187 OSG) is still shown on a recent company fleet list.

Burnley & Pendle BL

The new Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers for the X43 will be numbered 4301-16. Plaxton President-bodied B7TLs 2701-9 (Y701-9 HRN) will then transfer to Lancashire United for the X1, 2711-6 remaining here for the 152 (Blackburn-Preston), replacing the last Volvo B10Ms, East Lancs-bodied 426/7 (K267 WBV) and Alexander-bodied 432/3/42/68 (M232/3 TBV, M799 PRS, K740 DAO).

Keighley & District The Zone-branded TransBus Dart Mini Pointer Darts 719/20 (YJ04 LYD/F) have been transferred here.

Former Sovereign Dennis Javelin/Plaxton DP47F 142 (L142 BFV) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B31D 544/7 (V544/7 JBH) have been in use as driver trainers. However 142 has been withdrawn and Darts 546/8 (V546/8 JBH) are to be allocated as Eclipse driver trainers. Further to January Fleet News, these are the only ex-Sovereign London Darts allocated to this fleet.

The 25 new Wright-bodied Volvo B7RLEs due next year for Burnley Mainline will see off the remaining Volvo B6s in the fleet, Alexander ALX200-bodied B6LEs 2001-5/7-11/3/4 and Alexander Dash-bodied B6s 644-50, 781 (M876 NMK, L645-50 OWY, M386 VWX).

Burton, Haverhill TGM

New for recently won National Express service 787 (Cambridge-Heathrow) are Volvo B12B/Plaxton YN54 ZHK-M. Further acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver P701 LCF from parent TGM and Iveco EuroMidi/Indcar W654 SJF. Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Derwent G234/5 BRT have been withdrawn.

Cardiff Bus

Articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro/B49T demonstrator BX54 EBC has been evaluated, numbered 009 here. Optare MetroRider 122 (M122 KBO) has become a driver trainer but 126 (M126 KBO) has been sold for scrap.

Carsville, Urmston, Manchester

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F TSO 15X is ex-Stephenson, Rochford while Elite, Stockport has transferred ex-London Olympians C110/20 CHM here.

Centra Passenger Services

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s S725 KNV from A-Line, Bedworth and X167 BNH from Menzies Aviation, Heathrow have been noted on the Star City park-&-ride service in Birmingham, along with Scania L94UB/Wright Access Fliolines S350 SET, V140 XLV and L94UB/Wright Solar LY51 ZUD, still with Dunn-Line legan lettering.

Central, Four Oaks, Birmingham

Ex-Arriva Midlands North Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) Sprint N356 OBC is here.

Centrebus, Leicester

Following the withdrawal of service in Grantham by MASS on 1 February, Centrebus started operating there

(see News this month). It has taken over some MASS vehicles, including Dennis Dart K588 MGT, DAF SB220/Ikarus L540 EHD, Mercedes-Benz O405/Optare Prisma N290 DWY and Optare Excels N203 LCK, new to Blackpool, and ex-Trent S955 NRA, S159/62 UAL. Ex-Trent Volvo B10M/Alexander Q-type M53 PRA also appears to be at Grantham, ex-MK Metro.

Chambers, Bures, Suffolk

Ex-Metrobus Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneer H47/25D S848 DGX and ex-London Central Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties P901 RYO have been acquired and are being converted to single door. Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties P549 WGT is in fleet livery.

Claribel, Birmingham

The five new VDL SB200/Wright Commanders reported last month are registered YJ54 CEA/F/K/N/O.

Click Services, Pemberton, Lancs

Ex-Go North East Optare MetroRider M934 FTN is here.

Clynnog & Trevor, Trefor

A Bristol VR cull has been enabled by acquisition of ex-Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H43/30F B110 SJA and C156/8 YBA.

Another acquisition is Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F L435 CPJ. Ex-Crosville Bristol VRT/SL3 JMB 404T has gone for scrap, but its registration has been transferred to a car. Other VRs retired are Alexander-bodied WTG 369T and ECWs BKE 850T and BAU 178T, the latter pair sold for scrap.

Collinson, Ribchester, Lancs

Ex-Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F B137 WNB is used on a contract to Myerscough College at Bilsborrow, still in Stagecoach colours. Leyland National Greenway IIL 2156 (BRH 180T) is here from Smith, Ashington.

D&G, Adderley Green

Further examples of City of Stoke-on-Trent's new SlimLine Optare Solo M780/B24F are 61-3 (YJ54 BSX-Z), which entered service in mid-December. Two are for services 874 (Longton-Barlaston) and 95 in the Tunstall area. These are the first 7.8m Solos for the fleet and four more Solos are expected for Cheshire Rural Rider work. Dawsonrentals Mercedes-Benz Varios covering for

Below: De Courcey, Coventry's MCV Evolution-bodied MAN 14.220s include 546 (AE54 MVX), in Thomsonfly.com livery for the service to Thomson-owned Coventry Airport. **TONY HUNTER**



Mercedes-Benz 611Ds 90-5 (T131-5 ARE) are expected to be retained. The 611Ds retain the white and pale blue Cheshire County Council livery. 92 hasn't yet been used and 95 is withdrawn.

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright B28F 57/8 (K223, 197 JNV) from MK Metro have been re-registered GNZ 3562, 3420, while 56 is GNZ 3461, and from Stagecoach come similar 59, 60 (K317/08 YKG). Mercedes-Benz 709D L653 MYG is numbered 24, while accident-damaged 48 (LLZ 2452) has been withdrawn and LHE-bodied 23/4 (ANZ 9883/2) have also gone.

De Courcey, Coventry

Delayed delivery of the 14 MAN 14.220/MCV Evolutions resulted in the hiring of Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader R530 YRP, Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied S723/4 KNV, T461/4 HNH, T418 MHN, V388 SVV, Mini Pointer Dart W671 TNV and East Lancs-bodied Dart SLF Y433 PBD from Dawsonrentals. New Evolution 546 (AE54 MVX) wears Thomsonfly.com livery.

MCW Metrobus MkII ROX 630Y is in Asda livery for a shuttle service. Leyland Lynx G294 KQY has become a bus shelter at Coventry Airport.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

More used arrivals are ex-Arriva Midlands Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F R128/38 LNR, from Stafford Bus Centre, which are being converted to automatic transmission before entering service, and are expected to be followed by R127 LNR.

Unusual Volvo B10M/MCI Sedisa KSK 932 N615 MPN shown in Buses February in B&Q livery, has been repainted into bus livery, along with SIL 8752.

New Durham Panthers are FD54 DHN/O.

EasiRider, Huddersfield

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider-bodied F178 WYV has been sold at auction.

Eastbourne Buses

Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220 133 (H533 YCX) has been sold to Safeway, South Petherton.

East Thames Buses

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini VWL5 (LB02 YXC) has been destroyed by fire.

East Yorkshire EY

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 362 (J730 KRH AHZ 2162, 647 JOE, J199 TNB) has gone to Direct Coach Sales.

Elite, Stockport

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F HWV 231X (OFV 16X) is here from Stephenson, Rochford (dealer) and Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F YMB 508W is also acquired, from Smith, Marple. Olympians C110/20 CHM are with the associated Carsville business.

Ensignbus, Purfleet EB

Following the end of the rail replacement contract for the Strood Tunnel, Volvo B6s 708/23/33/53/4 (L708 FWO, L423 XVV, L833 CDG, L453/4 YAC) have been sold to Glenvale and 764 (L664 MSF) to Regal, Edgware.

Epsom Buses

Nine East Lancs-bodied Alexander Dennis Darts are due shortly for Transport for London work.

Fairbrother, Warrington

Former Go North East Olympian B745 GCN is understood to have been on loan and has also appeared at the A1 premises at Stretton. MAN 11.190/Optare



Above: First Coaches 20300 (WX54 ZHM) is one of four Plaxton Prima-bodied Volvo B7Rs for the upgraded Bristol Airport service. **STEVE RICE**



Above: Four of the new East Lancs-bodied Alexander Dennis Tridents for First Devon & Cornwall being driven off the Torpoint Ferry. They replace adapted Bristol VRTs. **FIRST**

Vecta/B45F M702 RVS is an acquisition from Morrow, Glasgow.

First Berkshire FG

Another B60F BMC 1100FE schoolbus at Bracknell is 68522 (RX54 OGZ) and 68502 (BU04 CCF) has returned to BMC off-lease. More Dennis Darts sent to First Somerset & Avon are 46196/8 (L206/8 GMO).

First Bristol FG

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver B23F 50258 (M259 VWU) is here from First West Yorkshire in Leeds. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 40079 (J912 SEH), 46204 (L204 SHW) have transferred from Somerset & Avon.

First Coaches FG

New for the Bristol Airport service are Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima C53F 20300-2 (WX54 ZHM-O). Further to last month, B7R 20303 (WM03 BYD) remains here.

First Cymru FG

Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury 23126 (P26 RFS) has returned to First Devon & Cornwall.

First Devon & Cornwall FG

Four of the new East Lancs-bodied Alexander Dennis Tridents for the 80/81 Plymouth-Rame Torpoint Ferry service appeared at the formal launch of the service in February, and went into service on 14 February. The four, which appeared without fleetnumbers, are WA54 OLO/P/R/T, named *Heron*, *Cormorant*, *Spoonbill* and *Egret* respectively. They are in a purple and blue TamarLink livery. Plymouth City Council is also providing three new ferries for the Torpoint services, so this will see the end of Bristol VRT/SL3 operation in this area.

Ex-Hong Kong Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B41F 42754/8/64/84 (S653/8/64/84 SNG) have arrived from First Eastern Counties in exchange for 42446-8/51/8 (R446 CCV etc). Meanwhile Bristol VRs 39906-8, 39943 (LEU 256P, JHW 107/8W VDV 142S) have come from First Somerset & Avon. 39943 is convertible, the rest open-top. More Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Beaver B22F from First Wyvern are 52527/39 (S527/39 RWP). Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury C55F 23126 (P26 RFS) has returned from First Cymru.

It is reported that 2003-built TransBus Dart 42875 (SN53 KKE) has been withdrawn following fire damage. Out of service here are Dennis Javelin/Plaxton 21136 (P236 CTA) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton 42111 (R611 HCR).

Confirmed withdrawn are ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 30024 (A746 JRE), Duple 425s 21287 (MKH 487A), Volvo B10M/Plaxton 20042/7/54 (FNJ 905, HFN 769, WNN 734), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus

45342 (JDZ 2342) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright 50748 (J148 SJT), 811D/Plaxtons 50849/54 (K349/54 ORL), 709D/Plaxtons 50903/6/22 (K603 CRL etc), 811D/Wright 50950/3/4 (K723 WTT, K753/4 XTA) and 709D/Plaxton 51019 (L819 SAE).

Further to last month, Volvo B7R 20303 (WM03 BYD) remains with First Coaches.

First Eastern Counties FG

Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers 32537/8 (YJ54 XVE/F) have been diverted temporarily from First West Yorkshire and will be followed by 32539-42. They are on loan until new park-&-ride buses arrive.

More Dennis Darts from First Devon & Cornwall are Plaxton Pointer 2 B35F-bodied 42446-8/51/8 (R446 CCV etc). Ex-Hong Kong Darts 42754/8/64/84 (S653/8/64/84 SNG) have gone to Devon & Cornwall.

The PSV Circle confirms the withdrawal of Dennis Dominator/East Lancs 30014 (F147 MBC), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45325 (JDZ 2325) and 45414 (LDZ 9114), ex-Waylands Mercedes-Benz 609Ds 51383/7 (M883/4 XVG) and ex-Flying Banana Mercedes 709D/Alexander 51689 (N589 WND).

First Essex FG

Braintree depot was expected to close on 26 February. The last remnants of Chelmsford's hallowed Duke Street had gone under the demolition hammer by 26 January.

Mercedes Benz Varios 52580-5 (V430-5 GTW) have passed to Stansted Transit along with Village Link services 5 and 7, which it is hoped will alleviate a driver shortage that led to advertised regular cancellations in Chelmsford services 33, 36, 48, 288, 351 and 352. Route 32 (Chelmsford-Ongar) was also given up to Imperial, Rainham from 17 January.

Withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton 51468 (M668 VJN) and 51778 (P678 HPU) and another of the few remaining Leyland Lynxes, 62523 (F423 MJN). 709D 51474 (M674 VJN) has been reported at Colchester as an engineers' van. 51475 (M675 VJN) is also there to replace 90246 (the former 2656) as a driver assessment vehicle.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

Convertible open-top Bristol VRT 39937 (VDV 137S) has come from First Somerset & Avon, which has taken Volvo B10BLE/Wright 66166/7/71-3/8 (W366 GOW etc).

Right: The new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs for First Somerset & Avon are in the RailLink version of Barbie livery. 66721 (WX54 XDE) is in Bristol. **STEVE RICE**

First Leicester FG

New are Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32639-45/7-50 (KP54 AZA-D/F/G/J/N, KBK/N/O). 32639-42 were whisked off for rail replacement services at Totnes, but 32639-44 were in service by 25 February; the Wyvern Tridents were still in Leicester then. Gemini 32646 was apparently held up following an accident on delivery.

The Dennis Dominators' days are numbered. 39136/50/2 (F636 BKD, F150/2 MBC) have been withdrawn, leaving only 39088 and 39146 (E88 HNR, F146 MBC) running in March. Dominators 39093/6/7 (E93 HNR etc), have been collected by scrap dealers, as was 39129 (G629 EKA) but in error — which is expected back again for cannibalisation.

The Leyland Lynx influx from First Wyvern continues. 62738 (G138 HNP) entered service in Barbie livery in mid-January, when 62705/8/13/23/39/43 (G105 HNP etc) arrived, taking the tally up to 21. There can now be few depots with as many Lynxes under one roof. However, the future of two Lynxes is in doubt as 62707 was struck by an Arriva bus, and stored 62715 (G115 HNP), plus four schoolbuses, were damaged in a fire at Abbey Park Road depot on 24 February.

The Nightrider services reported withdrawn after 18 December restarted on 7 January.

First London FG

Six 7.8m Optare Solo SlimLines have replaced Marshall-bodied Mercedes Varios, 52593-8 (R413-8 VPU).

Dennis Dart/Marshall 41206 (R206 TLM) is another transferred to First Glasgow while Wright-bodied Darts 45343/72/3 (JDZ 2343/72/3) have gone for scrap.

First Manchester FG

Ex-Timeline Mercedes-Benz 811///Alexander Sprint 50149 (N175 WNF) has been withdrawn.

First Northampton FG

Another two BMC 1100FE/B60F schoolbuses are 68520/1 (KP54 AZU/V). They were delivered in November, but had moved to West Yorkshire by January.

The Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra gas buses were not used between early-December and early-February at least, 66001-4/6 (P501 MVV etc) joining fire-damaged 66005 off the road. First Leicester loaned several vehicles to replace them, including, yet again, Duple-bodied Volvo B10M 66611 (E111 NNV). Also here are Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse 66301/2 (KV02 VVC/D).

First Potteries FG

Management functions which had been transferred to Manchester have been transferred back to Stoke.

Former London Volvo Olympians 34223/6/7 (P223 MPU etc) are in the latest Barbie livery but 34224/9 remain red. ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 30063 (A165 VDM) is a surprising repaint into latest corporate livery.

After a period at Selwyns' workshops at St Helens, all six electric Gulliver Tecnobuses have re-entered service on the E1.

First Somerset & Avon FG

New B29F Alexander-Dennis Mini Pointer Darts 42552-7 (WU54 EFP/R/T/V-X) are at Bath.

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B44F 66166/7/71-3/8 (W366 GOW etc) have been transferred from First Hampshire & Dorset. 66171 is at Bath, the rest at Taunton. More Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B37F from First Berkshire are 46196/8 (L206/8 GMO).

Leyland Olympian 34963 (G903 TWS) has been repainted in Asda colours.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 51381 (M382 KVR) and Leyland Lynxes 60095 (H861 GRE), 62461 (F361 YTJ) have been withdrawn. Open-top Bristol VRs 39906-8, 39943 (LEU 256P, JHW 107/8W VDV 142S) have passed to First Devon & Cornwall and 39937 (VDV 137S) to Hampshire & Dorset, but 39910 (UFX 860S) is sold.

continued overleaf...



Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 40079 (J912 SEH), 46204 (L204 SHW) have gone to First Bristol, Leyland Lynxes 62561/4 (H611/4 YTC), 62629 (F629 RTC) to First West Yorkshire and Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 66101/12-4/9 (R901 BOU etc) to First South Yorkshire.

Mercedes minibuses sold are 51308/45/74/92/3 (M508 VYA, M45 BEG, M674 RAJ, M392/3 KVR), 51403 (M803 UYA), 51531 (M831 ATC), 51611 (N611 GAH) while Optare Solo 53000 (V980 XUB) is with the National Trust. Also sold is Volvo B10M/Van Hool 66600 (D600 GHY).

Alexander P-type-bodied Volvo B10Ms 66501/12 (KFX 791, TPR 354) have reverted to D101/12 GHY and 66512 is in Poland (presumably for driver training).

First South Yorkshire FG

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B44F 62232/40 (Y937/49 CSF) have been transferred here from First Edinburgh, similar B47F-seated 66101/12-4/9 (R901 BOU etc) from First Somerset & Avon. Another former First London Volvo Olympian/Alexander H47/25D in use at Rotherham is 34234 (P234 MPU).

Although allocated to the driving school, Volvo B10M 60475 (G630 NWA) was still in service in at Olive Grove in mid-December along with 60469 (G624 NWA).

First West Yorkshire FG

More Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H45/29F are 32520-34 (YJ54 XUK/M-R/T-Z, XVA/B). Similar 32537/8 (YJ54 XVE/F) have been diverted temporarily to First Eastern Counties and will be followed by 32539-42 (q.v.). B7TL 32445 is another fitted with guidewheels for use in Leeds; 32431-47 are all fitted. 32464-73 are branded for Purple Line service 49 (Bramley-Seacroft).

Also new are Optare Solo SlimLine M780/B24F 53821/2 (YJ54 UXF/G), based in Todmorden to replace Optare Aleros 50409/10 on the Hebden Bridger minibuses services. A further two new BMC 1100FE/B60F schoolbuses are 68520/1 (KP54 AZU/V), also at Todmorden for use in the Bingley area; as they were originally with Northampton.

Meanwhile, not quite so new are Leyland Lynxes 62561/4 (H611/4 YTC), 62629 (F629 RTC) from First Somerset & Avon (as driver trainers?).

The only MCW Metrobuses left in service by mid-January were 31046/7/50/1/71 (B247 WUL, A943 SUL, B267 WUL, C375 BUV, OJD 882Y) at Huddersfield and 31042/56 (BYX 308V, GYE 368W) at Halifax.

Withdrawn are Leyland Olympians 30595, 30684, 30773 (CUB 23Y, C484 YWY, FUM 498Y), Dennis Dart 40553 (JDZ 2378) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50256-8 (M257-9 VWU); 50258 went to First Bristol. Also withdrawn is Leyland Leopard driver trainer 90089 (JKW 216W) — the last bus in former York allover green.

Redundant vehicles removed by PVS for scrap are Metrobuses 31039/41/5/59-61/72-5 (ANA 171Y, GYE 371/85, 488, 523W, KYV 769X, OJD 883Y, A898, 979 SUL, GYE 369W), Olympian 30684 (C484 YWY) and Dennis Lance 61010 (N472 JUG).

First Wyvern FG

More Leyland Lynxes to go to First Leicester are 62715/8/21/7/32/40/2 (G115 HNP etc), while Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beavers 52527/39 (S527/39 RWP) have joined others at Devon & Cornwall.

Fishwick, Leyland

Ex-Lothian ONCL10/2RZ/Alexander H51/30D 32-4 (F352/3/5 WSC) ousted Leyland Lynxes 25, 30/3 (D25 VCW, D30/3 YCW) from service 111 (Leyland-Preston). Lynx 32 (D32 YCW) has been sold to Edwards, Fearn, Ireland.

Focus, Much Hoole, Lancs

Volvo Citybus/Alexander G92/6 PES have been acquired ex-Travel Dundee, Leyland Tiger/Duple 300 B55F F902 JBB from Low Fell, Gateshead.

Further to June Fleet News and the photograph in February, ex-Stagecoach Hull Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties VIL 4028 was originally E927 KYR. The others of this type are VIL 4027/9/37 (E923/1/05 KYR).

Other ex-Stagecoach (Manchester) Olympian/Northern Counties are B49 PJA, YIL 4415-7 (B135 WNB, B122 TVU, B67 PJA) and coach-seated C213 CBU, which is to be re-registered YIL 4418 while B49 PJA is here temporarily and will be sold later in the year. Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413/Crest NK51 OOO is re-registered YIL 1710.

All double-deckers acquired are thoroughly refurbished before entering service, including fitting LED rear lights, closed-circuit television, seatbelts and each vehicle retrimmed in its own distinctive moquette.

Right: Hayton, Burnage 12 (P101 HNC) is one of two ex-Mayne, Manchester Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzens in this Greater Manchester fleet. **CHRIS LOWE**



Above: 116 (T510 APS), the sole Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLE in the new GM Buses fleet. Although it looks orange in this light, technically the base colour is the same shade of red as UK North uses on its main fleet. **LUKE GOTTARD**

The fleet also includes ex-Lancashire United Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties PTD 655S and Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Derwent LTE 491P. Both are in full LUT livery and carry current psv certificates, the Fleetline seeing occasional use on school runs, but LTE 491P is in storage with the Wigan Transport Society.

Volvo Ailsa/Alexander HSR 46X has returned to Nuttall, Penwortham, while HSR 50X went to Bennett, Warrington.

Managing director Darren Critchley says 'enthusiasts are always welcome at my yard as long as they are polite and ask permission to look around'.

Garrett, Rushy Mead

Another now-rare Duple 425 integral coach has been acquired to join those already here. Joining WIL 3620 (E611 AEY), E209 EPB and WIL 3630 (H237 RUX) is WIL 3640 (F110 CCL) from Wombwell, Ecclesfield.

Geldard, Leeds

Scania N113DRB J818 HMC is confirmed numbered 313, and Volvo Citybus/Alexander F123 PHM is 318.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

Acquired is Optare Solo SlimLine/B24F demonstrator YN04 XZB, destined to join the new Mini Pointer Dart reported in February on Wrexham-area council contracts.

Ex-Arriva Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 R140 LNR has been re-registered R2 GHA and has been joined by ex-Stagecoach Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprints N722/4 RDD. Ex-Stagecoach East Midlands ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian C330 HWJ is expected in service imminently.

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 VAH 279X and Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner J124 AHH have been sold.

Glenvale Transport, Liverpool

Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3017/Alexander Dash B41F 7134 (J506 GCD) is ex-Stagecoach South East. Volvo B6-50/Alexander Dash B40F are ex-Easyrider, Huddersfield 7284 (L413 JBD), ex-Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester 7285/6/96/7 (L842/40/39 CDG, M844 EMW),

ex-Stagecoach East Midland 7287/94 (L436/8 LWA), ex-Stagecoach Devon 7288 (M343 NOD), ex-Stagecoach Western 7291 (M676 SSX) and DP40F 7289/90/2 (M720/73/27 BCS), ex-Stagecoach Wales B40F 7293 (L701 FWO) and ex-Stagecoach Transit DP40F 7295 (L237 CCW). Meanwhile acquisitions from Ensignbus's service fleet are Volvo B6s L708 FWO, L423 XVV, L833 CDG, L453/4 YAC.

Fifty-seven Leyland Titans survived into 2005. MCW Metrobus 818 (OJD 818Y) has been reinstated and 547, 631 (GYE 547W, KYO 631X) have been recertified for a further year. Remaining Metrobuses are usually allocated to services 60, 10C/210 and on Saturdays to services 26/27 and 17B. 658/60 (KYV 658/60X).

Leyland Titan 2156 is named *Nicole*, Volvo B6 7200 *Polly-Mo*, 7248 *Paula-Donna*, Dennis Dart 7610 *Eden* and Leyland Lynxes 2054 *Ella*, 2057 *Ann* and 2075 *Sue*.

Dennis Dart 7126 (K707 PCN) is to be scrapped. Goodwin, Carlton (dealer) has taken Metrobuses 658/60 (KYV 658/60X), 1210 (B210 WUL), Titans 2154 (CUL 154V), 2458 (KYV 458X) and 2746 (OHV 746Y), 2882 (A882 SUL) for scrap.

GM Buses, Gorton

As reported in News last month, this UK North-associated operator started on 7 February on the Stockport Road corridor of service 192 (Manchester-Hazel Grove) in competition with Stagecoach Manchester. Livery is a red with a white roof using original-style GM Buses fleetnames, fleetnumbers and two-letter garage code (GN — not GT as we stated in error in News last month). The first vehicles to gain these are DAF SB220s 100/3 (M605, 822 RCP), 111 (R397 XDA) and 113-15 (W176-78 CDN), plus Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 116 (T510 APS).

Go North East GA

Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F are 5224-8 (NK54 NVX-Z, NWA/B). Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 4978-82 (NK54 NUH/J/M/O/P) are allocated to Go-Wear Buses at Deptford.

The last Optare Excels have been withdrawn. They



were 8144/6/76/8/82 (R244/6 OCU, T876/8/82 RBR). Excels 8155-7 (S35 NRG, S156/7 OCU) have gone to Wilts & Dorset as driver trainers.

Also withdrawn are Optare MetroRiders 409/12/4 (N409/12 NTN, P414 VRG); Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointers 8405/6/8/9 (L405 GPY etc) and Alexander Dash-bodied 8413/5/6/23/5 (L413/5/6 KEF, M423/5 PVN) and DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4735/45 (G735/45 RTY). MCW Metrobuses 3628/30 (A628/30 BCN); Leyland Olympian 3651/7, 3734 (C651/7 LJR, B734 GCN) have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Halifax Joint Committee

The first Leyland Olympian here is former Arriva North East (new to Merseybus) ONCL10/1RZ/Alexander RL-type H45/30F F234 YTJ.

Hallamshire, Sheffield

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Pointer B23F N907 GHJ and N68 GPU are in stock from Pilkington, Accrington, Alexander (Belfast)-bodied N168 WNF from Arriva Midlands North.

Ford Transit H847 AUS was re-registered OVJ 852, then B9 TJW, renumbered TJ9. Transit/Dormobile H188 EHA has become TJ15 (B15 TJW). The previous TJ9, 15 (B9, 15 TJW, D526/5 HNW) are withdrawn.

Halton Transport

Following on from TransBus Dart/East Lancs B43F 48-50 (DK54 JPJ/U/O), another three (with Alexander Dennis chassis) were due in March, when managing director David Cunningham retires.

Hampson, Fleetwood

Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F HJB 462W is here ex-Williams, Lower Tumble.

Harrod, King's Lynn

New is the first Iveco for this company, EuroRider/Plaxton Paragon C57F YN54 WWM.

Harrogate & District BL

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns due from Yorkshire Coastliner are DP46F 441 (X441 YUB) and DP43F 442-6 (YD02 UMU-X, PN02 HVZ), to replace B10B/ Alexander Striders 504/8-10 (N504/8-10 HWY) and displace Volvo Olympians 408/9 (L8, 9 YCL) to Keighley & District.

Harrogate District Community Transport

Chris Hough kindly writes to tell us the origin of the Roweller name for its Ripon local service. In the 17th century, Ripon was deemed to make the best spurs in the country and a rowell was the spiked wheel at the end of the spur that was used to get your steed to move faster.

The operator is 'owned' by community groups based at Boroughbridge Harrogate and Ripon. The Harrogate office is in East Parade — for many years head office of the West Yorkshire Road Car Company.

Hatton, St Helens

Accident-damaged Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall T310 MBU has gone to Lloyd, Hixon for salvage.

Hayton, Burnage

Acquisitions are Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Deauville 1 (M628 KVV) new to Shearings, and 15 (L265 VUS) a B10M-60/Van Hool Alizée C53F new to Crawford, Neilston. Fleetnumbers are: 1-4, 6-9 (XCZ 4124, P59 XNL, P102 HNC, YIL 4027, T448 UCH, N703 FLN, YSK 331, S745 RNE), 10/6-18 (S87 JBA, S464 JGB, BUI 2649, MV53 ENE) and 20/1 (X481 AHE, G114 FJK).

Herbert, Sheffield, Beds

Ex-First Devon & Cornwall Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver L633 VCV is on the Biggleswade town service.

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

For the schoolbus fleet come ex-Travel Dundee Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Alexander RV-types G93/7, 100/1 PES). They are expected to replace East Lancs-bodied Volvo Ailsas A287-90 TSN — also new to Travel Dundee's predecessor, Tayside.

Hodson, Gisburn, Lancs

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton CheetaH YN54 DDE is in use.

Ipswich Buses

Leyland B21s 144/5 (B114/5 LDX) are withdrawn.

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry

Wigley, Carlton (dealer) has removed the cannibalised remains of Leyland National 2 FWA 472V.

JP Travel, Middleton

Dennis Mini Pointer Darts T466/7, 544 HNH are in use.



Above: Kimes, Folkingham 78 (WAZ 8278), a former Go North East Scania N113DRB with Alexander RH-type body, in Spalding bus station. **ANDY IZATT**

Paul James, Coalville

Recent Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2s are YU04 XHX/Y.

Johnson, Hodthorpe, Notts

Another ex-Go-North East Leyland Olympian/ECW is B742 GCN. Bristol VRT/SLs PFE 544V and JWL 993/7N are with Wilfreda-Beehive, Adwick-le-Street.

Jones, Llanfaethlu

Former London Central Leyland Olympian/ECW C39, 85 CHM have been in use in allover green. Leyland Atlanteans UCW 430X and A29 JBV have been withdrawn. Mercedes-Benz L608D minibuses C124 LHS, D166 VRP and D955 UDY have been sold for scrap.

K&B, Penrith

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/Onyx C24F MX54 KLA, due to oust 609D/Reeve Burgess E996 VYS.

K-Line, Honley, W Yorks

DAF SB120/Wright Cadet 5 (YJ51 ELO) is in stock from Stephenson, Easingwold.

Keighley & District BL

Due shortly are Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban DP43F 601-14. They will replace Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 221-3 (L642-4 OWY), Leyland Olympian/ECW 345/7-9/69/71/82 (A605/4/2 NYG, B517 UWW, A603 NYG, B515 UWW, A684 MWX), Volvo B10B/Alexander 501-3 (N501-3 HWY) and Volvo B10BLE/Wright 521/2/6/7/9-31 (R521 TWR etc).

The B10BLEs have been sold to Traction Group, as have Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympians 905-7/13-5 (K2, 6, 7, 3-5 YCL) which are to be replaced by Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympians 408/9 (L8, 9 YCL) from Harrogate & District and similar DPH45/27F-bodied 926-9 (P926-9 UUG) from Lancashire United.

The Zone-branded Mini Pointer Darts 719/20 (YJ04 LYD/F) have been transferred to Burnley & Pendle.

Following the sale of Sovereign Bus & Coach to Arriva, Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B31D 543/7 (V543/7 JBH) will come here as driver trainers to replace Leyland Olympian 393 (C480 WYW) and Dennis Javelin 163 (L103 SDY).

Kimes, Folkingham

The three ex-Fowler, Holbeach Drove Scania N113DRB/Alexander F259 CEW, F312 PEV and F314 RHK were re-registered WAZ 8276/8/7 and have since been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer). Similar ex-Go North East Scania G675/9 TCN have been re-registered WAZ 8278, TAZ 4061; the former is No.78.

Kinchbus WG

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton B27F 819 (N819 RFP) has gone to South Lancs, Atherton.

Kings, Stanway, Colchester

Bova Futura T222 ABC is an uncommon C35Ft 10m FHD10.340 model, not as stated in February Fleet News.

Kirkby-Lonsdale Coach Hire

Former Travel West Midlands Mercedes Benz 811D/Marshall P227/8 EJW have been acquired.

Konectbus, East Dereham

B29F Optare Solos 998/9 (MX03 YCY/Z) are on loan to replace Mercedes-Benz Varios 877/83 (R277/83 RAU), sold to TM Travel, Staveley.

Ladyline, Key Green, Cheshire

An unusual acquisition here is former Ministry of Defence Leyland Leopard/Wadham Stringer B72F B701 AKM, to be used to on a newly won school contract.

More variety was created by the loan of ex-Ulsterbus Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS NX1 6843, which was used in service showing Belfast as the destination.

Mercedes-Benz minibuses F185 PRE, G111/7 TND and G126 TJA have passed to M&M, Accrington.

Lancashire United BL

Burnley & Pendle Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F 2701-9 (Y701-9 HRN) are to be transferred here for the X1 (Manchester-Clitheroe). As a result, Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royales 926-9 (P926-9 UUG) will go to Keighley & District; the last Volvo B6LEs, Alexander ALX200-bodied 212/5 (P347/1 JND), B10Bs, Alexander Strider-bodied 505-7 (N505-7 HWY), and B10M, Alexander-bodied 431 (M231 TBV), will be withdrawn.

Ex-Sovereign London Dennis Dart 550 (V550 JBH) is to replace Dennis Javelin trainer 153 (L153 BFV).

Linkast, Benfleet, Essex

Acquisitions comprise former West Midlands MCW Metrobus BOK 40V, latterly with Amber, Rayleigh, and former Arriva London Metrobuses B219/52 WUL. Now withdrawn are Bristol VRT/SL3s VCA 458W and STW 25W and Metrobus GYE 363W. Metrobuses WYW 34T and OJD 888Y and Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard/Plaxton LJA 288V have been sold.

London Central/ London General GA

As reported in 'In London', six Wright Electrocitiy diesel-electric hybrids have been ordered in place of the 12 Alexander Dennis Enviro200H hybrids originally expected for London Central route 360.

More vehicles re-registered are Volvo B7TLs AVL46 (46 CLT), WV194 (WL 694), which revert to V146 LGC and LF52 ZNG respectively, Volvo Olympians NV145/6 (545 CLT, WLT 346) revert to R345/6 LGH and Dennis Dart LDP76 (176 CLT) reverts to R476 LGH.

Darts LDP32/9 (P732/9 RYL) have gone to fellow Go-Ahead subsidiary Oxford Bus Company.

AEC Routemasters sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet are RM436, 782 (WLT 436, 782), RM1002/33/62/97, 1119 (OYM 368A 2 CLT, DSL 540 33 CLT, 62, 97, 119 CLT), RM1621/66 (JGJ 339, 179A 621/66 DYE), RM1955/77/80 (ALD 955B etc), RM2128/51 (CUV 128/51C), RML2316, 2676 (CUV 316C, SMK 676F), while another Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties sold to Ensign is NV101 (P901 RYO), sold on to Chambers, Bures.

Go Ahead chief executive Chris Moyes has retained Routemaster RM1058 (58 CLT).

London Hoppa

This new competitor on the Stansted-London corridor started last October as the Stansted Hotel Hoppa, operated by Rutherford, Skelmersdale using Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 310D/Advanced Conversion V626 EWF and W887 COJ with luggage trailers. Skylark PSV, Gravesend took over in January and renamed the business. Livery is white with black stripe and buses serve West End hotels and Kings Cross before terminating at Victoria.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver T434 EBD and V398 SVV have been hired from Dawsonrentals.

GROUP CODES

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Group

As reported in News last month, Alexander Dennis Enviro200/B27D prototype SN54 GRU entered trial service on the 33 (Fulwell-Hammersmith) in February. AEC Routemasters RML2342/58, 2465 (CUV 342/58C, JJD 465D) have gone to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow. Also sold are RML2463 (JJD 463D), at the Pump House, Walthamstow, and RML2519 (JJD 519D).

Ludlow, Halesowen

Scania OmniCity demonstrator YN04 AHA has been acquired and re-registered N1 EOS.

M&H Travel, Gorton

This operator has gained a Greater Manchester PTE school bus contract, using Irisbus Scolabus FD54 ENE.

M&M, Accrington

Acquisitions from Ladyline, Congleton are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Robin Hood B29F F185 PRE, replacing ex-Cumberland L608D D44 UAO, and 811D/Carlyle B33F G111/7 TND, G126 TJA.

Maghull Coaches, Bootle

Dennis Dominator DDA1025/East Lancs H45/31F F639 BKD is here from Stott, Oldham.

Matthew Parker reports that Leyland Titan BTX 206T (WDA 1T) was bought by proprietor Kevin Reilly, but this particular one, West Midlands' first, was not intended to be used and indeed work to strip the vehicle had begun. Matthew bought the vehicle from him last May for restoration to WMPTE condition.

Manchester Airport

More TransBus Enviro300s are KX54 NKF-H.

MASS, North Anston

More exotic acquisitions are tri-axle Leyland Olympians C886/7 RFE and Dennis Dragon B953 GWJ.

Grantham Leyland Titans WYV 13T and NUW 579, 608Y have moved to Finningley, where Leyland Olympian 163 (ANA 2Y) is withdrawn. Also withdrawn is Leyland National WPR 150S. Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 82 (W82 JBN) has passed to Brown, Crawley. Titan A951 SYE and Leyland National VEU 228T are scrapped.

Grantham services have passed to Centrebus, Leicester, with Dennis Dart K588 MGT, DAF SB220/Ikarus L540 EHD and Optare Excels N203 LCK, S955 NRA, S159/62 UAL. Before that, Grantham received Dart 143 (N598 DWY) from Finningley.

Optare MetroRider 152 (S792 XUG) remains in service.

Metrobus GA

New are Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs H45/29D 494-7 (YN54 AJU/V/X/Y). Five Scania OmniCitys are due to operate route X26 (Heathrow-East Croydon), the replacement of the 726 from 16 April.

The six new Alexander Dennis Darts at Orpington, 251-6 (SN54 GPV/X-Z, GRF/K), replaced the remaining non low-floor Darts there. Orpington depot is being rebuilt and its 70 vehicles have moved to a temporary depot at Polhill.

Metroline DG

Twenty-two Alexander Dennis Tridents are due to replace Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians on route 266 (Hammersmith-Brent Cross). Meanwhile Volvo B7TL/Lexander Dennis President H43/24D VLP629-37 (LK54 FWH/J/L-P/R/T), the last buses built at Wigan, have been delivered for routes 43 and 134.

MRD Travel Services, Bromsgrove

Former Stagecoach Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint B23F L327 YKV is in use on service 90 (Bromsgrove-Catshill) and 322 (Bromsgrove-Fairfield).

NBM, Penrith

An unusual acquisition is of Macedonian Coach Industries C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 FLE 234Y (EBZ 6296, YNV 30Y) from Dunn-Line.

Network Colchester TGM

Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool C48Ft R20 TGM and Plaxton-bodied R50 TGM are both at work here with Colchester Coachways fleetnames.

When reporting vehicles movements here, be aware that the Colchester base being used to undertake work on other Tellings-Golden Miller vehicles, which are not being operated here. Volvo Citybus/East Lancs H683 GPF

Right: Pulfrey of Foston has provided some of the Grantham-area replacement services given up by MASS and has been using A207 DTO, an ex-Warrington Leyland Olympian with East Lancs body. It retains Warrington colours and was new to Derby City Transport. ANDY IZATT



Above: Ludlow, Halesowen N1 EOS — seen at Merry Hill shopping centre — is the Scania OmniCity formerly known as demonstrator YN04 AHA. TONY HUNTER

hasn't been here for service work, similar Alexander-bodied G619 OTV was here only for bodywork attention on behalf of Haverhill. Mercedes-Benz P703 LCF is confirmed as coming from Haverhill and was used sporadically as a crew transfer vehicle for just two weeks, and has been returned.

T160/2 SBJ and T13 VCC are awaiting despatch to dealers. DAF SB220/Ikarus 4336/7 (J926/7 CYL) have been despatched to Arriva Southend for storage.

Newport Transport

Withdrawn are Scania N113DRB/Alexander RH-types 143/4 (F43/4 YHB). Scania BR112DH/Wadham Stringer-bodied driver trainer 117 (RUH 17Y) was sold for scrap.

Nottingham City Transport

Two more Scania OmniCity/B42F are 221/2 (YN54 NXL/K), 221 in white as a Link spare, 222 yellow for Link 2, 219 is also white as a Link spare, not yellow.

Further to February Fleet News, the Optare Solos repainted were 266-8/99 (V266-8 DRC, T299 BNN).

The last Leylands, Olympians 481/2 (K481/2 GNN), are to be withdrawn this year when the next Scania OmniDekkas arrive. Sadly, South Notts livery will also disappear this year. Scania 640 (P640 ENN), has South Notts branding applied to its network livery.

Volvo Olympian/East Lancs 485/6 (L485/6 NTO) have been withdrawn. The Scania donated to the Asia Bus Response appeal (Global News last month) is driver trainer N113CRB/Alexander 855 (G755 SRB). Its place in the training fleet has been taken by Scania L113CRL/Northern Counties Paladin 763 (M763 SVO).

Notts & Derby WG

Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladin 131 (M131 PRA) has been transferred here from Trent Barton.

South Lancs, Atherton has acquired Mercedes-Benz 709D/Marshall B27F 41/2 (L811/2 CJF). All services are now worked from Derby Meadow Road.

Olympian, Harlow

New here are MAN 18.350/Noge Catalan YN54 JSU/V, JUE/F. Vehicles sold consequently were Leyland Tiger/Plaxton URH 657 (BRY 1Y) to Gerry, Harlow and Leyland Leopard/Plaxton DCA 31S to a private owner, while Volvo B10M/Plaxton K20 CCL (K500 CAP) has gone to Mentor (dealer), Rotherham and Marshall-bodied Iveco M154 RBH has gone for scrap, although similar M731 AOO remains in service. Also acquired is MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta B40F K801 DCF.

Oxford Bus Company GA

London General Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B32F P732/9 RYL have been acquired and are being refurbished; they are expected to enter service as 411/2.

Marshall-bodied Darts 510/2/5/9 (M510 VJO) have been donated to the Asia Bus Response appeal to get buses into the region devastated by the Boxing Day tsunami.

Preston Bus

Ex-Lothian Leyland Olympians E323-32 MSG retain their former owner's fleetnumbers 323-32 and are being rebuilt to H51/33F and repainted before delivery. Fishwick operates three similar buses into Preston.

The fleet repainting programme started in 1999 has been completed by Optare MetroRider 35 (R435 NFR), eliminating the blue and ivory introduced in 1967 and the Preston Mini fleetname. Leyland Olympian 110 (J110 KCW), which was repainted in 1999 in an experimental 'swoops' livery, is in standard double-deck non-low-floor livery.

ProTours, Heselwall

New Volvo B12B/Berkhof FB54 AVX is to be followed by another pair, to oust the last Scania coaches, with a sixth due shortly.

Pulfrey, Foston, Lincs

Another double-decker is ex-Warrington Borough Transport A207 DTO, a Leyland Olympian/East Lancs new to Derby City Transport.

Pulham, Bourton-on-the-Water

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the start of a carrier's service by the Pulham family in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds. The company has helped mark the event by taking delivery of new Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile coach GL54 PUL.

Reading Transport

The Scania L94UB/Wright Solar 12m single-deckers numbered 1001-12 entered service on 7 March with 05 registrations (see p12). 1001-11 are in a deep green and beige variant of the company's new livery, for quality routes 4, 5 and 6 to south Reading; 1012 is in the charcoal and beige all-routes generic version though intended primarily as spare bus to cover for 1001-11. A further eight Scania L94UB/Wright Solars, 1013-20, have been ordered for June delivery.

The first repaint into Reading's new liveries is of former TransBus Enviro300 demonstrator 974 (SK52 USS), now in charcoal/beige. Mk1 MCW Metrobus 193 (LMO 193X),





Above: The latest addition to the 125-year-old Pulham's business is GL54 PUL, a Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R. **COLIN F. MARTIN**

still in commemorative livery, re-entered service from Reading depot on 2 February, followed by Optare MetroRider 624 (N624 ATF).

Twenty Optare Excels have been sold to Ritchie's Coachlines, Swanson, Auckland, New Zealand, and were being shipped through Southampton during March; those departing are 917-24 (R917-24 SJH), 937-40 (T937-40 EAN), 943-5 (V943-5 DCF) and 946-50 (R201-5 DKG). Of these, 946-50 were the last acquired from Cardiff in 2000 to replace the Reading Mainline Routemasters, while 937 was a Loddon Bridge Park-&-Ride-liveried vehicle; 931 will take its place in the Park-&-Ride fleet.

Regal, Edgware

Ex-Go North East Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RV/ECW H45/32F C668 LJR and former ex-Ensignbus, Purfleet Volvo B6/Alexander Dash DP40F L664 MSF are here.

Renown, Bexhill

New is Alexander Dennis Dart/Caetano Nimbus B28F FN54 FLC. Meanwhile, Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B35F P695/9 RWU is ex-Gibson, Renfrew and Optare Solo M850/B27F V933 VUB ex-RDH Services, Plumpton.

Road Car YT

Leyland Atlantean AN68/2/Northern Counties VCX 340X has been sold to Stephenson, Rochford (dealer) as the proposal to convert it into an ancillary unit for Yorkshire Traction came to naught.

Rossendale Transport

Ten Optare Solos are expected in March/April; the last of the current order is 53 (YJ54 UXW). Ex-London Dennis Dart B3 (H109 MOB) is due for imminent withdrawal.

Safeway, South Petherton

DAF SB220/Ikarus B50F H533 YCX has been acquired from Eastbourne Buses. It was new to Ogden, St Helens.

Sargeant, Kington, Herefordshire

Fiat Ducato YX54 XWU demonstrator for Scarborough-based Bluebird (which undertook its Migra 11-seat psv conversion, complete with plug-type doors) has been in use here, first noted in early December on service 468 (Kington-Knighton).

Semmenge, Wymondham, Norfolk

Bedford YNT/Plaxton Paramount-bodied OSU 314 (RPS 380Y) has been withdrawn.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Yet another new coach for Llandow (Thomas of Barry) is Iveco EuroRider/Beulas YN54 AEB.

Further Mercedes 811Ds rebuilt by Vizabus in Macedonia are Optare StarRider G102 KUB and Plaxton Beavers H494 OHB and F671 DBO. Mercedes minibuses not in service are F672 DBO, F918 FWY, G97 KUB, H688 UHH, K588 MHY, L466 XNR, T160 PNY, T493 SKG although some of these could be in Macedonia.

Further ex-Arriva London Leyland Olympian/ECW are C66 CHM, D226/32 FYM, while C813 BYY and D217 FYM are in use from Abercynon. Former Phoenix Travel Olympian JTY 382X is at Abercynon (ex-Barry) and East Lancs-bodied Scania W303 MKY is also at Abercynon (ex-Newport). A further ex-Stagecoach Leyland Lynx is F103 HVK, which, along with F118 HVK, appears to have been acquired for spares.

Dennis Dart/Marshall N144 XEG has moved from Barry to Pyle and is repainted in Bridgend Bus Company's Tillingbourne-derived livery. Also in Bridgend Bus livery are Dennis Dart SLFs R751 XPO, W393/6 WPX and ex-2 Travel Dart/Wright Handybuses K981/8 CBO.

Latest withdrawals are of Leyland Titans OHV 680, 815Y and A901 SYE, and Leyland Olympian JTY 400X.

Simonds, Botesdale, Suffolk

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver DP33F AU54 JRV in CountryLink livery.

Skills, Nottingham

A Mercedes Benz Touro OC500/Caetano demonstrator was tried but although EvoBus will supply two new coaches soon, they apparently won't be Touros.

Leger Holidays-liveried Setra 44 has been repainted in Derby University livery. Neoplan 33 (N13 SMC, W901 MDT) has been sold to a Scottish operator, which will return its cherished registration plate.

SM Travel, Harlow

Optare Solo W7 JPT has been acquired ex-JP, Middleton. Iveco minibuses K707/8 FNO and L699 NWX have been sold for scrap and Bova Europa LUI 5579 (A319 HFP) has also gone. Marshall-bodied Iveco M159 RBH is with Olympian, Harlow.

Southern Vectis

New Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts 301-14 (HW54 BTU/V/X-Z, BUA/E/F/H/J/O/P/U/V) were delivered in December to B31F layout, but were converted to B27F before entering service. They reintroduce a green livery to the fleet, albeit in a modern form. Sister company Solent Blue Line operated 313/4 until 1 March, pending the removal of some speed humps in Ryde.

South Gloucestershire, Patchway

Former Stagecoach North East B49F Leyland Lynx 2s K622/3/5/8 YVN have been acquired.

South Lancs, Atherton

Several Wigan-area services have been taken over from Blue Bus, Bolton, along with that operator's outstation at Appley Bridge and Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts W12 BLU, X13 LUE, X14 BLU. These and T10/1 BLU, already acquired from Blue Bus, will be re-registered with SLT plates soon, and in the meantime T10/1 BLU have

continued overleaf...



One of the new Southern Vectis Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts, 313 (HW54 BUU), on loan to sister company Solent Blue Line in February. **MARK LYONS**

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

SG

Staus Bus
& Coach
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group



Above: Stagecoach Manchester 29801 (MX53 VHO), one of the Vehixel-bodied Irisbus Scolabuses operated on behalf of Greater Manchester PTE, at Glossop depot. JOHN YOUNG

been re-registered T973/4 TBA. Three Mercedes-Benz 709Ds have also been acquired from Wellglade companies, Plaxton B27F-bodied N819 RFP from Kinchbus and Marshall B27F-bodied L811/2 CJF from Notts & Derby. SLT is now the second largest operator in the Wigan area, with 25 buses operating there on weekdays.

Two further 9.5m Optare Solos due in late-March will probably replace ex-Go-North East Darts J627/38 KCU.

Southlands, Polhill, Kent

Sullivan Buses took over this business (the former coaching side of Metrobus) on 1 February. Vehicles drafted into Polhill from the Sullivan fleet so far are Leyland Olympians G293, 300 UYK and Dennis Dart SLF CN02 SUL, used on routes in Tunbridge Wells.

The fleet that passed to Sullivan was Leyland Titans T1072, 1112 (A627 THV, B112 WUV), ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians L912, 1033 (JHU 912X, LWS 33Y), Optare MetroRider MRL152 (H152 UUA), Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers DRL2, 8, 14 (J602/8/14 XHL), rare Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 321s TP201/2 (J201/2 FMX) and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton JP208/9/11, JPT214/5 (M208/9 BGK, N211 HGO, P214/5 TGP).

We understand that Southlands will retain the coach fleet and lease or hire it to Sullivan.

Sovereign Bus & Coach BL

The fleet sold to Arriva the Shires & Essex is listed under that heading.

Speedwell, Glossop

New Optare Solo M850s MX54 KHV/Y, WMJ/K are here.

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire ST

Gas-powered Metrorider 47901 (GAZ 4382) and diesel-powered 47972 (K972 HUB) have been sold for scrap. Market Deeping outstation closed on 30 January, its two double-deckers being transferred back to the main Lincoln Road depot in Peterborough.

Stagecoach East ST

Dennis Dart SLFs from Stagecoach London are Alexander ALX200 B29F-bodied 34097/8 (S497/8 BWC) and Plaxton B31D-bodied 30139-41 (V139-41 MVX), which will presumably be converted to single-door.

Mercedes 709D 40379 (L379 JBD) joined the ancillary fleet at Bedford for use by the publicity department, but has been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet, along with 40376/8 (L376/8 JBD).

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs transferred from Stagecoach Manchester following contract gains in Hull were Northern Counties H43/30F-bodied 13165/70/93/5 (C165/70/93/5 YBA) and Alexander RH H45/31F-bodied 14613 (C613 LFT), which began life with Busways.

Stagecoach London ST

The Designline Olympus, 80009 (VX04 MZG) has visited, for use on 276 (Newham General Hospital-Stoke Newington). The Volvo B7LA/Hispano, FJ53 LZX, has left London.

Fire-damaged Dennis Trident 17369 (Y369 NHK) has been scrapped. Dennis Dart 34097 (S497 BWC) has gone to Stagecoach East, while 34083/8, 34101/3/39/40 (S483/8 SWC, S101/3 WHK, V139/40 MVX) helped out at Carlisle after the January floods.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Ten more ex-Citybus, Hong Kong Leyland Olympian tri-axle/Alexander RH-types for Magic Bus services are 13628/39-42/47/9-51 (FJ 4674; EF 3592, 6118, 8967, 8850, 9671; EV 3020; ET 1023, 1190; ES 8820); 13639/41/7/9/51 have been allocated UK registrations H604/17/06/7/3 LNA respectively, while 13640/4 are G283/78 YRJ. Ex-Citybus Olympian 13654 for Megabus.com is re-registered J688 TNF.

Ex-Stagecoach London Dennis Dart SLFs 34047/50 (R947/50 FOO) are refurbished, repainted and fitted with electronic indicator displays.

Mercedes-Benz Varios 42530/7 (P530/7 PNE) have been reinstated, while 42545/59 (P545/59 PNE) have gone to Stagecoach North West. Leyland Olympians reinstated are 13176/8 (C176/8 YBA) at Princess Road and 13173/81/5/91/8 (C173 YBA etc) and 13205 (C205 CBU) at Hyde Road. Olympians 13118 and 13285/9 (B118 TVU, F285/94 DRJ) have been converted to driver trainers, but the plan to convert 13205/15 to trainers to replace 13027/28 has been delayed.

Volvo B10M-55 20994 (R944 XVM) was omitted from last month's list of buses sent to Carlisle.

Olympian 13208 (C208 CBU) is awaiting disposal, while 13214 (C214 CBU) has gone for preservation and 13039 (B39 PJA), 13121/66/74 (B121 TVU, C166/74 YBA) have also been sold along with Dennis Dominator driver trainer 15011 (B911 TVR). Lister (dealer), Bolton has sold Olympians 13110/56/8 (B110 SJA, C156/8 YBA) to Clynnog & Trevor, for Gwynedd school contracts.

Five Olympians transferred to East Midlands following contract gains in Hull were Magic Bus-liveried 13165/70/93/5 (C165/70/93/5 YBA) and Alexander-bodied 14613 (C613 LFT), the last old Olympian running in Stagecoach livery here.

Alexander Dennis Tridents 18177-81 have returned from loan to Stagecoach Oxford.

Stagecoach North East ST

Former Stagecoach Bluebird Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner 2 trainer 52194 (NUF 276) has entered service at Walkergate.

Hartlepool-based Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladin B48F 20291 (M401 SPY) has gone on loan to Stagecoach North West at Carlisle, replacing Alexander-bodied 20695 (P315 EFL), which has returned to Hartlepool. Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider B51F 21001 (M901 DRG) has gone from South Shields to Carlisle, exchanged for B10M-55/Alexander B49F 20726 (K726 KAO), while Scania N113CRB/Alexander 28901 (F901 JRG) and Dennis Dart/Alexander 32563 (K563 NHC) have returned to Slatyford and Darlington respectively from Carlisle. B10M-55/Alexander 20838 (P838 GND) and Scania N113CRBs 28915/32/3/7 (F915 JRG, H432/3/7 EFT) are to remain at Carlisle.

Withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40092 (K492 FRG), 40283 (G283 TSL) and 40462 (N462 RVK). Ex-United States Air Force Dodge Commando driver trainer 48078 (G675 XTN) has been delicensed and Leyland Lynxes 29611/20/4/8 (G611/20 CEF, K624/8 YVN) went to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Stagecoach North West ST

All the vehicles involved in the flooding at Carlisle have been written off. Stagecoach North East Alexander PS-types that are to remain at Carlisle are Volvo B10M-55/B49F 20838 (P838 GND) and Scania N113CRB/B51F 28915/32/3/7 (F915 JRG, H432/3/7 EFT). Additional North

East buses drafted into Carlisle are Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladin B48F 20291 (M401 SPY) and Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider B51F 21001 (M901 DRG), while B10M-55/Alexanders 20695 (P315 EFL) and 20726 (K726 KAO), Scania N113CRB/Alexander 28901 (F901 JRG) and Dennis Dart/Alexander 32563 (K563 NHC) have all returned to North East. B10M-55/Alexander 20994 (R944 XVM) was omitted from last month's list of Stagecoach Manchester buses sent to help out at Carlisle.

Transferred from Stagecoach Manchester are Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 42545/59 (P545/59 PNE).

The former 901 (C544 RAO), a prototype Leyland Lynx, has been scrapped by PVS, Carlton (dealer), following several unsuccessful attempts to preserve it.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 14242 (URM 802Y) is with Fire Brigade Training, Chorley while Dodge Commando G13/Wadham Stringer driver trainer 48017 (RIL 5085, B529 DTH, 31 KC 17) is with Drive Wright Training School, Whitehaven.

Stagecoach Oxford ST

Stagecoach Manchester TransBus Tridents 18177-81 returned north in January following the delivery to Oxford of Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H47/28F 18195-9 (KN54 ZXR/L/M/O/P) in blue/white for Brookes Bus.

Stagecoach South East ST

Mercedes-Benz 709D 40889 (M889 ECD) has been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, while Fleetlink North West (dealer), Altrincham has taken similar 40925/46/56/61/5/72-4/6 (N925 NAP) etc. However, 40944 (N944 NAP) and Leyland Olympian 14170 (C170 ECK) have been removed from the disposal list and placed in reserve.

By January, Dennis Darts 32309/10/2 (N309/10/2 AMC), 32314 (PSU 787) and 32315/22-6 (N315/22-6 AMC) had all been re-equipped with Cummins ISBe engines as part of the Civitas programme at Winchester.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

All functions for the Oxfordshire business are separate from South Midland and both now operate entirely separately. Stagecoach South Midlands is no longer used as the regional trading name.

Volvo Olympians 16514-6 (R414-6 XFC) are in service at Leamington, but Mercedes-Benz 709D 41060 (N360 AVV), the last minibus in old livery, has been withdrawn for disposal from Rugby, Mercedes 811D 41505 (H495 MRW) being put back into use there. 709Ds 40146 (M346 KWK), 40150 (N350 AVV) and 811D 41506 (H406 MRW) are stored pending disposal.

The last Leyland National, 25602 (NOE 602R), passed to a Derbyshire-based preservationist.

Stagecoach West ST

Cheltenham & Gloucester has received new Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 DPH47/28F 18200 (VX54 NNK) with funding from Herefordshire County Council. It is based at Ross on Wye, where it for the Hereford/Ross-on-Wye/Gloucester/Forest of Dean route cycle. Also received by Cheltenham & Gloucester is 26002 (J402 LKO), a further ex-Stagecoach London DAF SB220/Optare Delta B49F for driver training. It is in Stagecoach stripes and has replaced Leyland Lynx 29116 (F116 HVK).

Swindon & District has received Megabus-liveried 13601 (BIW 4977, ER 9371), a tri-axle Leyland Olympian/Alexander CH53/39F new in Hong Kong in 1990, from Stagecoach Wales. It is an additional back-up vehicle.

Withdrawn from Swindon & District is Leyland Olympian/ECW 14367 (C112 CHM). Already withdrawn Swindon & District Olympian 14464 (MHS 4P C464 SSO) has had its body dismantled at Stroud, leaving its chassis for disposal.

Cheltenham & Gloucester Mercedes Benz 811D/Marshall 41806 (L806 XDG) has been placed into licensed reserve. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban 52265 (M165 CCD) has been repainted white and is being used at Gloucester on service work and driver training.

As part of Stagecoach's plan to refurbish Volvo B10M-55s, Swindon & District 20681 was the first Stagecoach West vehicle to have work started on it in January. Work includes new floors, seats and Hanover electronic destination displays.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-types C382/3 SAO are both in Asda livery. ECW-bodied Olympian UAR 219Y has returned from loan to Excel. Olympian A234 GHN sustained accident damage while on loan to Burton, Haverhill and will likely be scrapped.

Surprisingly, Olympians D380/1/4 XRS have been sold to Road Car.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Stratford Blue Travel Ltd
BASED:	Avenue Farm Industrial Estate, Birmingham Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire.
FOUNDED:	The Stratford Blue name has a long association with the town, but in current form from 2000 when Julian Peddle's Status Bus & Coach bought Newmark Coaches. That company closed in February 2001, but Peter Newman's Ensignbus acquired the dormant business, established its own all-year City Sightseeing open-top tour in competition with Guide Friday from May that year and moved shortly after into the former Stagecoach garage in the town.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?	In addition to City Sightseeing and a largely commercial Stratford town service, Stratford Blue secured a four-year contract last July to operate service X20 (Stratford-Birmingham) as part of Warwickshire County Council's County Links network, using the county's own buses. Operates the X50 (Stratford-Oxford) on Sundays and bank holidays. Also, rail replacement work, local private hires and special events transport.
LIVERY:	Ensignbus blue and silver, City Sightseeing red with graphics and Warwickshire green and yellow.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	21 including eight City Sightseeing open/part open-top double-deckers.
MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:	The TDI Minitram operated on trial in 2003 must be the strongest contender. Current fleet includes two rare Wadham Stringer Portsdown-bodied Darts, three Carlyle examples with Plaxton fronts (converted originally by Fleetmaster for Anglian Coaches, Beccles) and an air conditioned Carlyle (ex-London United) for the Cotswold/Warwick summer City Sightseeing tour. A Routemaster special events bus is in BET-era Stratford Blue livery. City Sightseeing open-top fleet includes an Ayats-bodied Volvo B7L (a second is due this coming summer) and a Volvo Citybus, while the front-line covered top double-deck fleet comprises two Alexander-bodied Dennis Dominators new to Grimsby Cleethorpes. The Warwickshire vehicles for the X20 are two still rare TransBus Enviro300s and a far-from-rare Pointer Dart..

One of three Carlyle Darts with Plaxton fronts in the fleet, 699 (ANZ 8797), on the Stratford town service in March sunshine last year. **JOHN MARSH**



Stott, Oldham

Dennis Dominator F639 BKD has gone to Maghull Coaches, Bootle.

Stratford Blue EB

A Dennis Dart/Wadham Stringer Portsdown here is H908 DTP, ex-Metrobus. Warwickshire County Council-owned Mercedes-Benz Citaros X438/9 KON have passed to Woodstone, Kidderminster.

Sullivan, Potters Bar

As noted above, Southlands has been taken over. Details of the fleet acquired are included under that heading. Ex-Metrobus Dennis Dart/Plaxton B35F K711/3 KGU have been acquired from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Supreme, Hadleigh, Essex

Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs XRF 25S has been sold for scrap.

Tanner, St Helens

Wright Crusader-bodied R484 GNB (R1 BLU) is a third Dennis Dart SLF from Bluebird, Middleton for increased Merseytravel commitments.

Tellings-Golden Miller TGM

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 8, 9, 17 (M80, 90, N70 TGM) have been withdrawn.

Timeline, Leigh

A notable arrival is Volvo Ailsa B55-10 MkIII/Northern Counties-MIL 8338 (WRJ 448X) from Coachmasters, Melling, one of three new to Greater Manchester Transport.

WRJ 447X was wrecked in an accident with Harris Bus, Grays several years ago.

TM Travel, Staveley, Derbyshire

This is another operator to take advantage of late-build Mercedes-Benz Vario minibuses before the need to make

them accessible, leading to new Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied YN54 WWU.

Similar acquisitions are ex-Konectbus, East Dereham R277/83 RAU. Other recent acquisitions are rental Optare Solo M850/B29F MX03 YCP and M920/B33F MX53 FDD, latterly with Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning, supplied by Mistral Bus & Coach (dealer).

Former Harris Bus DAF SB220/Optare Deltas G315/6 YHJ have passed to the Staffordshire Bus Centre.

Top Line, York

Arrivals from Edinburgh Tours are former Cardiff Bus Leyland Olympian/East Lancs open-toppers LBO 501X for the Guide Friday York Tour and A517 VKG for York City Sightseeing. Also in from Lothian is covered-top Leyland Olympian/Alexander F349 WSC, in Top Line Travel blue and yellow for local services and school contracts. Time has run out for ex-Guide Friday Park Royal-bodied Leyland Atlanteans. VPA 148S and KPJ 241W are for sale, as is MCW Metrobus BYX 141V.

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

ComfortDe
Igro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

SG

Staus Bus
& Coach
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group



Above: Weavaway Dennis Condor B10 MKF in its National Bus Company-style yellow schoolbus livery with Noah Vale fleetname and Ark the Erald Angel name. **JOHN MARSH**

Transit Group, Hare Street, Herts

Mercedes Benz Vario/Marshall B23F V430-5 GTW have been acquired from First Essex along with Village Link services 5 and 7. Also acquired is former Go North East Leyland National 2 UPT 670V.

Travellers Choice, Camforth

Orders call for four Volvo B12M/Sunsundegui, two B7R/Sunsundegui C57F and two B7R/Plaxton Profile C70F, to replace eight older vehicles. Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral C51Ft X111, 222 LGH are acquisitions from Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle.

Travel London NX

Dennis Dart/Caetano T415-7 LGP, new to Limebourne, have gone to Thomson, Glasgow.

Travel West Midlands NX

Former Travel Dundee Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 4300-4 (ST02 MZV/O/P/N/U) and Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400s 4620-34 (BX54 XSH-M, XRO/T-W/Y/Z, XSA/B) are in service at Birmingham Central. 4610 (BX54 DEU) has been branded in celebration of the Warwickshire County Cricket Club's success last summer in the County Championship, the Pershore Road services on which it works pass the ground. 4611-21 (BX54 DFA/C-E, XSC-H/J) are branded for these services. Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 4635/6/58/9 (BX54 DFF/G/N/O) carry branding for Outer Circle 11.

Mercedes-Benz O405Ns 1540-9 (R140-9 XOB) have lost Primeline livery in favour of standard Travel Coventry livery and route branding in a similar style to articulated O405GNs 6001-3/5/6/8/9/11 (S314 JFP S1 TWM, T602/3/5/6/8/9/11 MOA) and Citaro 6021 (BJ03 ETL) at Coventry. Volvo B6LEs 586/7 (R586/7 YON) are in Travel Coventry livery following the loss of the Park-&-Ride North contract, while 592/3 (R592/3 YON) wear a revised scheme for the South service.

Volvo B10B 1333 (N133 WOV) is back in service in low-floor livery at Wolverhampton.

Mkil MCW Metrobus 9958 (D958 NDA) has returned from Travel London to continue in its driver training role in Birmingham, as has Leyland Lynx 9069 (F69 DDA), while Lynx 9072 (F72 DDA) has been transferred there again.

Now withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 811D 238 (P238 EJW), Mercedes Varios 251/3/5-7/9 (P251 RUM etc), Leyland Lynx 1181 (G181 EOG), Metrobuses 2473/83 (NOA 473X, POG 483Y), 2504/40/3/77 (POG 504Y etc), 2620/52/91 (ROX 620/52Y, A691 UOE), 2743/9/57/81/3 (A743/9/57 WVP, B781/3 AOC), 2801/28/44/6/51/70 (B801/28/44/6/51 AOP, B870 DOM), 2901/6/17/59/70 (C901/6 FON, D917/59 NDA, A110 WVP), 3067 (F67 XOF).

Sold are Lynxes 1273, 9145, 9259 (G273, 145/59 EOG) and Metrobuses 2468 (NOA 468X), 2500 (POG 500Y), 2677 (A677 UOE), 2720/38/9 (A720 UOE, A738 WVP), 2914 (D914 NDA) and the remains of Mercedes O405G artic 6010 (T610 MOA).

Metrobus 2527 (POG 527Y) is with McColl, Balloch, 2533 (POG 533Y) with Thurmann Bus, 2632 (ROX 632Y) with Andrews, Leicester, 2677 (A677 UOE) with a private buyer, 2687 and 2791 (A687 UOE, B791 AOC) with Roberts, Hugglescote, 2738 (A738 WVP) with UK Coaches, Countesthorpe. Metrobuses 2463/8/70 (NOA 463X etc), 2511/51/70, 2609 (POG 511Y etc), 2720/75 (A720 UOE, B775 AOC) and 2914 (D914 NDA), plus Lynx 1316 (G316 EOG) went to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

As disposal information has been a little piecemeal, I am grateful to Travel West Midlands correspondent Tony Hunter for trawling records to clarify disposals by month as

follows to enable your records to be updated:

October 2003: Metrobuses 2934/43/56/7 to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), 2935 to McColl, Balloch.

November 2003: Mercedes 811D 224, Metrobus 2987 to McColl, Balloch; 2445/7/52/9/72, 2597, 2655, 2847, 2946, 3016, 3101/24 to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap, 3121 to André Morris (of Transit Group/Standed Transit).

December 2003: Lynxes 1167, 1211/26/8/41-3/7/51-3/70/1/4 to Bus Éireann.

January 2004: Metrobus 2477 to McColl, Balloch, 2635 to Tile Hill College, 2963 to Goodsir, Holyhead, 2965 to Mayes, Normanton; 2986 to Ensign (dealer).

February 2004: Metrobuses 2502, 2600 and 3099 to André Morris, 2604 to Carousel, High Wycombe.

March 2004: Volvo B6LE 532 to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap; Metrobus 2485 to McColl, Balloch, 2563 and 2688 to Skill, Nottingham, 2991/3, 3004/6/57/9/92, 3106/9/12 to Fleet Link North West (dealer).

April 2004: Metrobus 2546 to Full Circle, Oxford, 2808/9 to Harpur, Derby and 2992, 3010/38/81, 3110/5/20 to Fleet Link North West (dealer).

May 2004: Metrobus 2493 to McColl, Balloch, Lynx 1213, Metrobus 2455/7, 2507/21, 2673, 2754/96, 3025 and 3105 to PVS, Carlton (dealer), 3033/48/79, 3104 to Fleet Link North West (dealer).

July 2004: Metrobus 2500 to Karen Rudd, 2671, 2706 and 2962 to Bob Vale Coaches — all actually with de Courcy, Coventry, 2639/92 to Mayes, Normanton and 2966 to McDonald, Wigston.

August 2004: Mercedes-Benz 811D 227/8 to Kirby Lonsdale Coaches; Lynx 1180 and 1305 to Bob Vale Coaches and with de Courcy, Coventry; 1227/44/6/73/7, 1280/98 and 1301 all to Midland Coach Sales, Ireland (dealer); Metrobus 2465 to Ensign (dealer), 2733/9, 2972 to Roberts, Hugglescote, 2640/7/64 to Franks, Thornton.

September 2004: Metrobus 2636 to Keeber, Leicester and 2834, 3095 to Centrebus, Leicester.

October 2004: Metrobus 2463/8/70, 2511/51/70, 2609, 2720/75, 2914 and 9316 to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap, 2677 to Pastor Henry Watts, 2632 to Weston, Groby and 2687 to Roberts, Hugglescote.

Trent Barton WG

The B42F-seated Optare Tempo X1200s arrived in February. 301-5 (FD54 JXZ, JYA-C/E) are green for the

revamped Nottingham-Bingham Xpress service, while 306 (FD54 JYF) is tan for Radcliffe Lines.

Since early January, the only vehicles garaged at Hucknall are six Scania for the Calverton Connection and four or five Optare Solos for the Connect town service.

Volvo B10B/Northern Counties 131 (M131 PRA) has gone to Notts & Derby.

UK North, Gorton

Volvo Olympians 200/8 (P340/2 ROO) have been converted to single doorway, while similar 201 (P344 ROO) is out of use after losing its roof.

Wardle, Sneyd Hill

New City of Stoke-on-Trent-owned Optare Solo SlimLine BU54 ALL entered service on 6 December. Wardle specified the Select registration to represent 'bus for all'.

Warrington Borough Transport

A further six Volvo-supplied VDL SB120/Wright Merits are due in July. Further to January Fleet News, Leyland Olympian 71's new registration is HBA 157Y: its original Crosville PFM 126Y was transferred on to an employee's car. Leyland Atlantean 14 (GEK 14V), latterly with Thomas, Port Talbot, has been acquired for preservation by the owner of Bristol RE 73.

Weavaway, Newbury

This innovative company has repainted its ex-New World First Bus Dennis Condors in a yellow schoolbus livery with 'Noah Vale' (for 'no avail'?) fleetnames in National Bus Company style with the NBC double-N logo.

West End Travel, Melton Mowbray

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 LP/HP54 WET are confirmed here.

Western Greyhound, Newquay

Three more Mercedes Varios/Plaxton Beaver 2 DP33F midibuses, which may well be the last 33-seat Varios, take the total here to 36. Ex-National Express Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale N124 YRW has become 600 (N600 WGL). Leyland Olympian DWW 930Y has been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet.

Wilfreda-Beehive, Adwick-le-Street

New are South Yorkshire PTE-funded Optare Solo M850s YJ54 UBR/T/U and SlimLine Solos YJ54 UB/V/W for services 203/204 and new 206/230. They were expected to don PTE blue and yellow livery. A further white Solo is YJ54 UBP, which is believed either to be owned by Wilfreda-Beehive or to be on loan from Optare to replace fire-wrecked Solo Y336 HWT.

Volvo B10M/Van Hool N527 PYS, B10M/Caetano M721 LJR and Dennis Dart/Plaxton T324 PNV have returned to Dawsonrentals, Hellaby ((dealer)).

Wilt & Dorset GA

The new standard bus livery — for routes other than the More and Unilink network — is the reverse of that style, with the main body in red, skirt dark blue and a light blue 'swoosh' in between. The first recipient of the new style was DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 3101 (K101 VLJ).

Optare Excels S35 NRG, S156/7 OCU have come from Go North East as trainers and will remain in that operator's red/blue livery, which will be regarded as a new training livery for W&D. The first is numbered 9100.

DAF SB220/Ikarus 3507/9/10 (N20, 15/6 WAL) have transferred to Damory Coaches, numbered 5045-7. Leyland Lynxes 5052/5 (E51 MMT, D112 NDW) have

Below: West End Travel, Melton Mowbray BU53 AXB, a low-floor Koch-converted Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 411, on the service to nearby Stathern. **DALE TRINGHAM**



been transferred to reserve, Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton 5021 (C877 CYX) being used recently as a driver trainer.
Tourist Coaches' Toyota Coaster/Caetano Optimo 6322 (L306 YAM) has been re-registered USV 115. Optare MetroRider 6113 (J511 RPR) has become a driver trainer.

Woodstone, Kidderminster

Transferred here from Stratford Blue are X438/9 KON, the two Warwickshire County Council-owned Mercedes-Benz Citaros supplied new to Guide Friday and transferred to Evesham with the contract for services 23/28 (Stratford-upon-Avon- Whichford/Evesham) from 4 January.

Worthen, Shrewsbury

Regrettably, Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Supreme IV Express RNV 413V (KUB 546V) was written-off after being stolen in Shrewsbury.

Wright, Newark

Ex-Nottingham Scania N113DRB/Alexander H47/33F G378 NRC has replaced former ex-Nottingham Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs SNU 461X.

Yellow Buses, Bournemouth

The three Volvo B12B/Caetano C49Ft for National Express work are 316-8 (HF54 KXH/J/K); their shipment was delayed until 23 December as they could not be certified in Portugal. In addition to the three VDL SB120/Wright Cadet midibuses this year, three more Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Vyking double-deckers are due.

The company's current fleetlist shows three Leyland Fleetlines in service, 138/40/76 (VJT 138/40S, MFX 176W), Rebuilt 130 (NFX 130P) was sold for scrap in December.

Yeomans Canyon, Hereford

Dennis Javelin/Duple 300 B55F 33 (G28 HDW) — new to Bebb, Llantwit Fardre — has been acquired.

Yorkshire Coastliner BL

The Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban DP43F will be 405-10 and will displace Volvo B10BLEs 441-6 (X441 YUB, YD02 UMU-X, PN02 HVZ) to Harrogate & District They will be followed by seven Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers next year, which will oust the last Volvo Olympians in the fleet, Alexander Royale-bodied 431-7 (W431-7 CWX), to Keighley & District.

Yorkshire Terrier YT

Last of the batch of 13 former Thorpe's Volvo B6BLE/East Lancs Sprytes to enter service here is 2509 (W519 CCK).

Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Sprytes 148/9 and DAF SB220/East Lancs Mylennium 2471 have been fitted with LED destination displays.

Leyland National 2s 2085/97/8 (SVV 585W, EDT 217/8V) have been removed from Holborn, leaving the remains of only three National 2s, 2091/4/9 (A304 JFA, A139 FDC, EDT 219V).

Yorkshire Traction YT

New are Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C49Ft 74/5 (YN54 YRG/J), 74 arriving in error as YN54 YRE. Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliners 61-3 (R761-3 DWG) are expected to be replaced by two more Plaxton-bodied B12Bs, which will have Easyshift gearboxes instead of the automatics fitted to others.

More vehicles to come to the group from Blazefield will be ex-Keighley & District Volvo B10B/Wright Renown DP47F R521/2/6/7/9-31 TWR and Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H43/27F K2-7 YCL, also from Keighley & District but new to Yorkshire Coastliner.

The former Go-Ahead London Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties are to be numbered 607-20 (N417/8/20 JBV, N534/41 LHG, P903/5/15/9/23 RYO, R252/3/75 LGH, R923 JMV) rather than 601-14 as first thought. First into service was 607 (N417 JBV) at Barnsley. It is in an all-over dark red livery with single white band above the lower saloon windows, reminiscent of that carried by the D-registered MCW Metrobuses when new. It has red fleetnames placed centrally on the white band.

Rebuilding of fire-damaged Volvo B6LE/East Lancs 131 (S131 WKY) is under way, but the future of accident

damaged Volvo B10M-55 904 (E737 HFW) is still in the balance.

DAF SB3000/Van Hool 42 (6078 HE) has reverted to its original R32 JYG registration, Scania/Van Hools 81/2 (4195, 1533 HE) reverted to N281/2 CAK before sale to Plaxton (dealer), South Anston. Liverpool Bus & Coach Rental, Aintree (dealer) has acquired ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 621/4/6/32/44 (SHE 621/4/26Y, A632/44 WDT), while 615/7 (SHE 615/7Y) went to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Leyland National depot shunter 251 (OHL 251X) has been under preparation at Central Works for use on the public highway and is to replace Leyland Leopard towing vehicle L7 (CHE 536K). The conversion of former Road Car Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs VCX 340X to replace Leopard recovery vehicle RV2 (OEM 625M), has been abandoned.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

Ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-type 46 (DMN 16R, 90 D 1036) has been renumbered 99 — its third fleetnumber since its arrival on the Island in May 2003.

Despite the arrival of a new East Lancs-bodied Alexander Dennis Tridents 1-16 (GMN 371-6N), Marshall-bodied Dennis Darts 22/4-7, 31/27-40 (DMN 22R etc) are being retained. 31 was the former 17 (DMN 17R) re-registered and renumbered, while 22/4-7 have also been renumbered 30/4-6/3 respectively.

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HALFCABS ETCETERA

JOHN G. LIDSTONE's quarterly update on older British buses at home and

AEC Routemaster

When new, RTs and RMs were sent abroad as ambassadors of the latest and best of British Industry; now, 50 years later, they are going abroad again as examples of what was once great.

Ensignbus has restored ex-Arriva London **RM311** (KGJ 142A, WLT 311) to its original livery and interior condition for new owner Schwarschild, London, which has taken it to Spain as a promotional unit for British fabric; it's expected to return to the UK for rallying.

RM1571 (571 CLT), the first bought by Southend Transport in 1986, has been converted to open-top and exported to a museum in Brazil. **RM1801** (EYY 773B, 801 DYE) and



RML2473 (JJD 473D) are with Da Willy Bus

Company, Linz, Austria. **RML2614** (NML 614E) is in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

With four decades of loyalty to traditional London double-deckers, Double Deck Tours of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada has updated its stock by buying

RML2467, 2501/55 (JJD 467D etc). The Lancastrian Transport Trust's **RM1583**, former Blackpool Transport 521 (583 CLT) has been restored in Blackpool red/white livery. And **RM1966**, subsequently Blackpool 529 (ALD 966B), is also being restored to Blackpool red/white at Busworld, Glasgow.

Albion Lowlander

Swiss-registered BS 8639, reported in Lorrach-Stetten on the Swiss/German border (Halfcabs Etcetera, January), is Alexander-bodied former **Western SMT** N1796 (UCS 660), previously owned by M. Ghidorzi (trading as London-Bus and painted red) on tourist routes in Basle.

Bristol Lodekka

Former Eastern Counties **FS5G** LFS123 (FVF 423C) has materialised in a front garden in Little Wakering, Essex, apparently still fitted out as a mobile caravan — as it has been for several years.



Ex West Yorkshire Bristol **FS6B** DX159 (283 BWU) is reported wrecked by vandals in Burnaby, British Columbia after use as a burger bar for 15 years at the same site.

Daimler

Former Leicester **CSG6/30** 182 (UJF 182) has been traced to an Italian operator, its registration now on an Ensignbus Scania towing vehicle.

Leyland Titan PD

Derelict full-front centre-entrance Blackpool **PD2/5** 246 (DFV 146) returned to the town on 22 September last year for the first time since 1975. The Lancastrian Transport Trust hopes to restore this sole survivor to its former glory.

Mike Nash, Weybridge has sold former Guernseybus 19 (47312, KYV 647), the most attractive dual-purpose forward-entrance ex-London **RTL**-class repainted in pseudo-London General livery. Its new owner an employee of Davian Coaches of Enfield, hopes to return it to psv use.

Former Southend Transport Massey-bodied **PD3/6** 335 (CJN 435C) — bought from preservation in the south of France by a businessman and then converted into a playbus — has disappeared from its home town after languishing among derelict buildings. 436 (CJN 436C), already converted at the time into a playbus, has since been preserved by Ensignbus.

A Bedford-based preservationist has bought former Leicester **PD3A/12** 30 (LJF 30F), which was a playbus in Bognor for several years. And Park Royal-bodied Leicester **PD3/1** 162 (RVS 432, TBC 162) is stored as it no longer fits the objectives of the Richmond County Museum in Augusta, Georgia, USA. It was exchanged in 1993 for a King Alfred **PD2/24**.

This battered and unidentified former London Transport RLH-class Weymann-bodied lowbridge AEC Regent III was still available for special events in Natchez, Missouri in the Deep South of the USA last summer. The contraption on the back is an air conditioning system, apparently fitted for its former role as a tour bus in the town. **ROY WELLS**

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

SG

Status Bus
& Coach
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to: **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **19 April** for the **June** issue.

Aberfeldy Motors

KVC M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi SN54 FBX was new last September. It has not been allocated a fleetnumber, in line with the firm's policy of only numbering larger vehicles.

Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 412D R20 AMS had left the fleet by August.

Allan, Gorebridge

It has been reported that an Irizar S-Kool-bodied Scania K94IB4 schoolbus is about to join this fleet.

Allander, Milngavie

Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R AT62 (SF03 ACJ) had been re-registered 3786 AT by February.

A & P Coaches, Barrhead

The operating centre has changed from c/o Puma Coaches at Yorkhill Quay, Glasgow to Shanks Industrial Park, Barrhead.

The services were to be changed from 28/29 March with 7 (Neilston-Braehead Shopping Centre) operating to a revised timetable; 8 (Pollok local service) withdrawn; 55 (Mossbank-Braehead Shopping Centre) altered to operate between Glasgow, Renfrew Street and Braehead via Paisley Road West and Hillington; and new peak hour express service X55 (Glasgow, Renfrew Street-Barrhead, Auchinback) being introduced.

Arriva Scotland West AA

B49F-seated Leyland Lynx 2 LX2R11C15Z4S J371 YWX, Arriva Yorkshire 371, was noted in Inchinnan depot in February but whether it has been transferred to this fleet is not yet known. Arriva North East B29F-seated Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 1732 (V732 DNL) returned to the fleet (at Inchinnan) in February, having previously been on loan for a spell which ended in December.

Further Mercedes-Benz vehicles returned by McGill, Port Glasgow in February at the end of their period of hire comprised Marshall C19-bodied 709Ds 292/4/5 (N801/3/4 PDS), 305 (N942 MGG); and Marshall C16-bodied 811Ds 245/9 (N808/7 PDS).

Wadham Stringer Wessex-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L970 VGE, similar 811D M422 GUS, Marshall C19-bodied 709D N802 PDS, UVG CitiStar-bodied 711D P491 TGA, Mellor-bodied 811D P936 YSB and Plaxton Derwent-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R 633 (TUP 572V, HIL 2148, TUP 572V) — the last Leopard in the fleet — were sold to Richman (dealer), Newcastle-under-Lyme in January.

Avondale, Clydebank

Service 500 (Clydebank town centre-Braehead shopping centre via Clyde Tunnel) which was started last November, is to be withdrawn on 15 April.



Lothian diverted double-deck service 2 on to the Fastlink guided busway in west Edinburgh from 6 February. Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Trident 620 (SN51 AYD) is one of 20 fitted with guidewheels for these duties. It carries a black 'G' suffix to its white fleetnumber. PHIL HALEWOOD

Ayrways, Ayr

H43/30F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R C184 YBA had joined this fleet by January, ex-Stagecoach Manchester 13184, and was still being used in full Magic Bus blue livery in February.

Blue Bus, Shotts

A further service due to start on 5 April is hourly Monday to Saturday 701 (Carluke-Livingston bus terminal via Newmains, Shotts, Harthill and Whitburn).

Caber, Aberfeldy

Alexander TE C49F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2RP D349 ESC, new as Eastern Scottish ZL349, had been acquired by November ex-NBM Hire, Penrith. It had been re-registered CRS 61T by December, by which time Alexander T type-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R CRS 61T had been sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall although its new registration is not known.

CC Travel, Paisley

From 13 April, this operator's service 64 is to change to run every 10min between Phoenix Park and Gallowhill via Ferguslie Park and Paisley town centre. The timetable is to be co-ordinated with Fereneze, Paisley service 64 to provide a combined 5min frequency.

Christie, Alloa

CH57/20Ct-seated Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 E89 VWA (PNR 723, IJI 336, E89 VWA) joined this fleet in December ex-Mason, Bo'ness.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

The Sunday operation of service 38 (Glasgow city centre-Eastwood Toll) is due to be withdrawn in April.

Coakley, Motherwell

East Lancs EL2000 B41F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 H916 XYT joined this fleet in January, having previously been owned by Arriva — at one time Arriva Scotland West 876. Further additions in February comprised

Carlyle Dartline B40F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL H923 LOX ex-Arriva Southend; Wright Handybus B35F-bodied 9SDL J316 XVX, also ex-Arriva Southend; and B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15s M115/21/32 KBO, N142 PTG ex-Cardiff City Transport 115/21/32/42. H923 LOX is to be used for spares.

All of these MetroRiders entered service in all-over white, while UVG UrbanStar-bodied Dennis Dart SLF P736 FMS has been repainted into fleet livery.

Cosgrove, Dundee

Plaxton Derwent-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ BHZ 1257 (D63 MEA, 82 KF 08) has been repainted into fleet livery in lieu of schoolbus yellow.

Davies, Plean

MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/23 SND 120X, Alexander TC-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH B821 RSH (GSU 377, B530 LSG) and Caetano Algarve-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R189 LBC (VFW 721, R189 LBC) had all been sold by February.

Earnside, Glenfarg

Irizar-bodied Scania K114EB YN51 MHJ was re-registered NHG 550 upon acquisition last October.

By December, Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B12M TVS 619 (FJ53 KZP) was all-over white with Consort Holidays fleetnames.

Fereneze, Paisley

Raymond Hill, trading as Fereneze Coaches, is due to start running service 64 (Phoenix Park-Gallowhill via Ferguslie Park and Paisley town centre) on 13 April. As mentioned above, this service will run every 10min and be co-ordinated with the similar service 64 operated by CC Travel.

First Aberdeen FG

Mercedes-Benz 709D 50412 has been repainted into the current corporate colours, having been the last bus in Grampian ivory and green livery with gold lining. Similar 50414 remains in all-over ivory.

Arriva Scotland West has sold 633 (TUP 572V), the last Leyland Leopard in its fleet. Although new in 1980, its Plaxton Derwent body was fitted in 1991. It was among the vehicles that Arriva Cymru acquired from Purple Motors of Bethesda and transferred to Scotland in 1999. ALAN MILLAR



MORE FUNDING FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIPS

Funding totalling £12 million has been awarded to Scotland's four regional transport partnerships to help improve public transport. In the west, Westrains and Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive are to jointly receive £7.3 million. Sestran in the south-east £2.8 million, Hitrans in the Highlands and Islands is £1.5 million and Nestrans in the north-east £575,000.

Each Partnership will be responsible for allocating the funding to specific projects. By 2007, the Scottish Executive will be spending £1.4 billion each year on a safer, more efficient transport network — 70% of it on public transport.

Councillor Alison McInnes, vice chair of Nestrans and chair of Aberdeenshire Council's infrastructure services committee, says: 'As a result of partnership arrangements with Stagecoach Bluebird, Bain's Coaches, Deveron Coaches and Nicoll Coach Hire, nine new low-

floor buses will make it easier for everyone to use public transport in more comfort and provide an increased frequency on key commercial bus routes. Sixty new bus shelters will also make waiting more pleasant.'

LANARKSHIRE COMPETITION

With the previously reported retirement of Walter Bryce and the subsequent acquisition of his Val-Ew Tours business in Coatbridge by the Coakley Bus Company of Motherwell, fresh competition has broken out in the Monklands. The combatants are the Coakley company and Stepend Coaches of Glenmavis, which previously competed with Val-Ew on the Kirkwood-Townhead route.

Coakley replaced Val-Ew on this route on 17 January, running it as service 15, and at the same time started a new service 262 (Airdrie-Kirkwood via Coatbridge town centre). In response to this increased Coakley presence in Kirkwood, Stepend extended its Townhead service 77 from Coatbridge town centre to Whifflet and Shawhead on 3 March. This provided competition for Coakley's established service 6 (Ttown Centre-Whifflet).

Coakley responded by registering a new service 177, duplicating Stepend's 77 between Coatbridge and Townhead and every 20min on Mondays to Saturdays, although the actual start date for this service is not clear.

From 4 April, Stepend will extend the competition away from the Monklands with a new service 55 in the heart of Coakley's established operating area, running half-hourly between Newarthill and Motherwell town centre via Carfin. Coakley, First Glasgow and Whitelaw's Coaches already link these areas.

As might be expected, this development has in turn brought about a response from Coakley, with three more services due to start in the Coatbridge area a week later, on 11 April. Monday to Saturday services 115 and 116 will jointly provide six more buses per hour between Coatbridge town centre and Kirkwood, to Swinton Crescent and Sports Barn. The third service due to start then will be the half-hourly 13 operating between Coatbridge town centre and Bargeddie. All three of these mirror facilities that Stepend has provided for some time.

Below: P737 FMS is one of four UVG UrbanStar-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs that Coakley has acquired from Mackie of Alloa. It is branded for a one-time Central SMT route connecting Hamilton and Bellshill via Motherwell, New Stevenston and Holytown.

MARK ALLAN



First Edinburgh FG

Further new Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UBs delivered during January and February were 65716-23 (SN54 KEJ/K/U, KFA/C-F); 65722/3 were allocated initially to Bannockburn depot, the remainder to Linlithgow principally for service 38 (Edinburgh-Stirling).

Vehicles transferred to this fleet from First Glasgow in January comprised MCW H46/31F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/72 31286 (G391 OGD), Leyland H47/31F-bodied Leyland Olympian ON2R50G1324 31344 (J137 FYS), Alexander Royale H42/29F-bodied Volvo Olympian 31485 (R139 EHS) and Wright Access Fioline B40F-bodied Scania L94UBs 65594/5 (W594/5 SNG). They have been allocated to Musselburgh (31286), Dalkeith (31344), and Linlithgow (65594/5).

With reference to the January issue, Wright Access Fioline-bodied Scania L94UBs 61227/9 are registered YM52 UWD/G.

Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLEs 62232/40 (Y937/49 CSF) were transferred to First South Yorkshire in January and February respectively.

First Glasgow FG

Recently delivered Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 32608/9 (SF54 TKN/O) were re-registered SF54 TKO/N respectively after only a few days in service. All outstanding examples of this type had entered service from Larkfield depot by February, comprising 32605/6/10/9/21-6 (SF54 TKE/J/T, TLO/X-Z, TMO/U/V).

Further Marshall Capital B22D-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs transferred from First London in November were

41202-5/7/9/17-9/21/4 (R202 TLM etc); while most of these vehicles have been allocated to Motherwell depot, 41221/7 entered service from Dumbarton in February.

UVG-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 40724 (P2 UVG) was noted in February on the Kilmarnock-Ardrossan route freshly repainted into corporate livery, indicating that the allover red livery for the Ayrshire operation is being phased out. Leyland Olympian 31413 [LO100] and Volvo Olympians 31428/523 [VO41/3] have been repainted into the current corporate livery, eliminating the allover white 'wedding hire' livery.

Vehicles transferred from this fleet to First Edinburgh in January comprised MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/72 31286 (G391 OGD), Leyland-bodied Leyland Olympian ON2R50G1324 31344 (J137 FYS), Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympian 31485 (R139 EHS) and Wright Access Fioline-bodied Scania L94UBs 65594/5 (W594/5 SNG).

Henderson, Hamilton

Three new Optare Solos delivered in February are B33F-seated M950s 654, 754 (YJ54 UWN/O) and B28F-seated SlimLine M880 854 (MX54 KXZ). All three have closed circuit television, Hanover LED screens and are in Strathclyde Passenger Transport carmine and cream livery and have been part-funded by SPT for use on service 47 (Monklands Hospital-Milngavie), on which they entered service on 22 February.

Solo M850 MX04 VUP, on loan from Mistral (dealer) since December, carries fleetnumber 888.

Allover white Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 FM1 (L269 CCK) was on loan from Ferrymill Motors during February.

Highwayman, Errol

Van Hool Eos 180Z SJI 4808 (R992 FNW, 98 C 23113, R992 ENW) has been sold to EvoBus (dealer), Coventry.

Hutchison, Overtown

From 6 March service 2 (Overtown-Hamilton bus station) was shortened to operate between Overtown and Motherwell only, and service 7 (Overtown-Heathery Roundabout) was withdrawn on 20 March.

Below: Despite their troubled reputation, rare Marshall Minibus low-floor midibuses continue to change hands on the secondhand market. R103 VLX is one of two with First Stop Travel, which uses them on routes around Paisley and south-west Glasgow.

PHIL HALEWOOD



Irvine, Law

New hourly service X5 (East Kilbride, bus station-Hamilton, Eddlewood via Fairhill, Hillhouse and Hamilton Technology Park) was due to start on 21 March.

Jacobite, Inverness

Jacobite Cruises Ltd, of Tomnahurich Bridge, Inverness (owned by former Rapsons and Scottish Citylink managing director Freda Rapson) is due to start registered summer tours from Inverness bus station on 7 April.

Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 1983 NT (X91 CNY) was given back its original registration before being sold to Holloway (dealer), Scunthorpe in November.

Lothian LB

FJ53 LZx, the articulated Hispano Habit-bodied Volvo B7LA demonstrator, which operated as London Central X62, arrived on two weeks' loan in mid-February. Although still in London red, white and gold harlequins and white Lothian fleetnames were applied along with 'Lothian Buses Trialling New Transport for Edinburgh's Future' branding along the sides. On 21 February it was put to work on service 26 (Drum Brae South-St Andrew Square part route), with an appropriate destination board in its windscreen.

In addition to 174 already reported, another nine Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Darts are to be given the green and white Park-&-Ride harlequin livery, including 165/71/2. These vehicles will initially offer a 10min frequency on limited stop service X48 (Inglinton-Waverley Bridge-Holyrood), which is due to start on 5 June, by which time it is anticipated that a suitable terminal will have been provided at the Scottish Parliament building. It is believed that three new styles of font for fleetnumbers will be tried out on these buses.

Service 2 commenced operation on the Fastlink guided busway section at Stenhouse from 6 February with Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 611-30G having transferred from Central to Marine Garage. Some buses were carrying G prefixes rather than suffixes (e.g. G616). Although fitted with guide wheels for this operation, 611-4 were still being used in normal service from Central in late-February. In return for the loss of these buses, Central has received Alexander ALX400-bodied Tridents 501-5 (completing their cycle of the depots) and will receive all of the remaining V-registered Tridents still to be converted to single door (in the series 528-38).

Canongate Junction was completely closed during the first fortnight in February, as a result of which service

35 was unable to operate to the bottom half of the Royal Mile and was diverted via North Bridge, Waterloo Place, and Regent Road. In a blast from the past of having circle routes operated in different directions by different route numbers, special services 59 (anti-clockwise) and 60 (clockwise) ran half-hourly to replace normal service 60 for the duration of the roadworks.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ONCL10s 323-32 (E323-32 MSG) were sold to Preston Bus in February, and were repainted into that operator's blue livery before leaving Edinburgh.

McGill, Port Glasgow

Mercedes-Benz Citaro BX54 ECV and TransBus Enviro300 PO54 NNM demonstrators arrived on loan in mid-February.

Further Mercedes-Benz vehicles returned to Arriva in February at the end of their period of hire comprised Marshall C19-bodied 709Ds 292/4/5 (N801/3/4 PDS), 305 (N942 MGG); and Marshall C16-bodied 811Ds 245/9 (N808/7 PDS).

McKindless, Wishaw

Former Stagecoach Wales Wright Handybus B29F-bodied Dennis Dart K996 CBO (NDZ 3155) was acquired in December, having latterly been briefly in the fleet of 2 Travel, Pentrechrwyth. January additions included Reeve Burgess B35F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL J118 HGF and similar Plaxton Pointer B35F-bodied K621/2 PGO, previously Metrobus 778/1/2.

Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL J603 KCU is currently out of use, having been badly damaged by fire in Kirkintilloch on 13 January while working on service 80.

The new bus garage in Nuneaton Street, Parkhead is expected to be brought into use in mid-April and a new service due to start on 21 April is 62 (Glasgow Cross-Clydebank, Fairlie) which will operate on a frequent basis on Mondays to Saturdays and every 15min on Sundays, in direct competition over its full length with First Glasgow service 62 and various services of other operators over shorter sections.

MacLeod, Rogart

Rare Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B6-45 OJL 8785 (M663 GJF, UWR 294, M663 GJF) was sold to Mentor (dealer), Hellaby last August.

McQueen, Garelochhead

Delivery of a new Optare Solo, partly funded by Strathclyde Passenger Transport for use on the SPT/Argyll & Bute Council subsidised service between Helensburgh, Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle, was expected in March.

Mackie, Alloa

Recently delivered Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE SL54 OSL is B43F.

Mayne, Buckie

The Marcopolo Viaggio 330 C57F-bodied MAN 18.310 displayed at Coach & Bus 2004 at the National Exhibition Centre in November entered service on 1 March registered SM05 GSM. Another new vehicle delivered in January is Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D SF54 COA, but in February it was re-registered MM54 GSM, which had been reserved for the MAN and with which it was displayed at the NEC.

Other coaches due for delivery this year comprise two Sitcar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815Ds, one C67F-seated Polish-built Autosan A1012T Eagle yellow-liveried schoolbus (which was also displayed at Coach & Bus 2004), another Marcopolo Viaggio-bodied MAN 18.310 but C70F-seated and three Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Volvo coaches.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113CRB YSU 989 (N550 GFS) was recently given back its original registration before being sold to Holmeswood Coaches, Holmeswood together with Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B10M-62 DM02 GSM, Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B10M-62s X222, 444 GSM; Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Scania K124IB4 Y111 GSM; and Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50Rs HM/RM52 GSM have been sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis. Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B10M-62 KM02 GSM has gone to Stokes, Carstairs. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B58-61 PYB 464 (RAY 3W) and Plaxton CheetaH-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D Y333 GSM have also left the fleet.

Miller, Calderbank

Plaxton C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ LBZ 2943 (D593 MVR) was acquired in October ex-Reg, Hertford.

The remains of Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R USV 807 (CDG 210Y) were sold to Vale (dealer), Great Kingshill in October together with similar TRCTL11/2R XEF 7Y.

Milligan, Mauchline

Irizar Century C49F-bodied Scania K114EB YN51 MHZ was acquired in November ex-Chambers, Moneymore 017.

Millport Motors, Millport

This operator is due to take to the road again on 1 April when the summer season service 320 between Millport Pier and Cumbrae Slip restarts.

Below: Former Citybus, Hong Kong Leyland Olympians added to Stagecoach Bluebird's Megabus.com fleet include 13638 (F265 LSA). Unlike those transferred earlier, it has gasket-mounted rather than bonded glazing. PHIL HALEWOOD



Mitchell, Plean

Wadham Stringer-bodied Dennis Javelin N887 HSX (EC 57 AA) and similar UVG-bodied R710 TRV passed to Rennie, Dunfermline in October and November respectively.

Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry

YN54 WCM and SP54 FML are two new Plaxton Profile C70F-bodied Volvo B7R coaches purchased recently, which entered service in October and January respectively. High-capacity single-deck vehicles are being used to replace double-deckers on the company's school contracts and private hires.

Further to the January issue, new Optare Solo MX54 KYG is a B29F-seated M850 example, while Plaxton C70F-bodied Dennis Javelin T645 JWB was previously used by Myall, Bassingbourn and joined this fleet in October.

Morrin, Glasgow

Optare MetroRider L740 PUA was repainted into Strathclyde Passenger Transport carmine and cream livery in January.

Park, Hamilton

Scottish Citylink-liveried Plaxton-bodied Volvo B12M LSK 483 has been given a rear end advertisement for the Glasgow Fort Shopping Centre.

Petrie, Forfar

Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin 8.5SDA G166 HMS (LSK 476, G166 HMS) passed to Rollason, Workington last July.

Rennie, Dunfermline

Two unlicensed C35F-seated BMC Probus 850 coaches were noted in this operator's yard in December.

Wadham Stringer DP70F-bodied Dennis Javelin N887 HSX (EC 57 AA) and similar UVG C70F-bodied R710 TRV were acquired from Mitchell, Plean in October and November respectively.

Riverside, Barrhead

New half-hourly, Monday to Saturday service 20 (Linwood, Clippens-Glasgow Airport via Paisley town centre) started on 1 March.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

A new Optare Solo, partly funded by Strathclyde Passenger Transport for use on the Irvine-Stewarton service, was due to be delivered in March.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

Mellor C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D Y368 TGE joined this fleet in December ex-Stepend, Glenmavis.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

New Plaxton Profile C51F-bodied Volvo B7Rs entered service in January as 53216/7 (SV54 EKZ, EMF), and are based at Peterhead depot for the Buchan Link services 260/263/267/268 between Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Aberdeen.

In a high profile launch attended by key councillors in the area, these newly branded vehicles were formally unveiled on 1 February at the Lido car park, Peterhead. The final three of the current delivery of these vehicles arrived in February as 53218-20 (SV54 EMJ/K, ENC) and have been allocated to Inverness with branding for service 25X (Inverness-Tain-Dornoch), with a similar launch having taken place in Inverness on 4 February.

Further to last month's issue, Neoplan Skyliner 50128 had not entered service from Aberdeen by late-February; instead, it was being in use as a driver trainer to familiarise drivers at depots across the Megabus network that were due to receive their allocation of the type in the coming months. Once its UK tour is complete, it is however expected to join Aberdeen's existing trio 50126/7/9.

Perth-based Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 33428 has been given an allover Learn & Earn livery in red, orange and blue but has lost its route 7 branding in the process.

Stagecoach Fife ST

Dennis Dart SLF 34086 was re-registered from S486 BWC to TSV 720 in February, with the result that both of the Go-Flexi Darts carry cherished registrations.

Stagecoach Western ST

Volvo B10M-55s 20109, 20515 returned from their spell on loan to Stagecoach North West at Carlisle during January together with Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40192 (G192 PAO), which had not previously been recorded as loaned.



Above: As we reported in February, A new Skewways business has started up at Kyle of Lochalsh. Its recently acquired Caetano Optimo V-bodied Toyota Coaster SN03 LJA — from Mayne of Buckie — was photographed on a rail replacement contract at Fort William. D. McGEACHAN

Mercedes-Benz 709D 40066 has been repainted back into corporate livery ex-allover blue Magic Mini, and Volvo B10M-55 20579 has lost its rear end advertisement for service 444.

Stepend, Glenmavis

Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N766 EWG was acquired last September ex-Stagecoach East Midlands 40766 and entered service in full Stagecoach livery apart from fleetnames. Another recent acquisition is Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 L713 WGA (USV 803, L713 WGA) ex-Stuart, Carluke. Mellor-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D Y368 TGE passed to Silverdale, New Stevenston in December.

Stokes, Carstairs

Berkhof Axial C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 KM02 GSM was acquired recently, ex-Mayne, Buckie.

Strathtay YT

In addition to the four East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers already on order for delivery in the summer, two new Optare Solos are due to join this fleet. In addition, it is expected that three Wright Endurance-bodied Volvo B10B single-deckers will be acquired from Blazefield-owned Keighley & District in the near future. During February, East Lancs Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TL 712 (SP03 GDV) was re-registered SP03 EUJ, but after about two weeks it was further re-registered WLT 743.

Many withdrawn vehicles had left the fleet by February, including Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 134/5/42/3 (C241/0/2/3 OFE); G&M-bodied Mercedes-Benz 508D 152 (G479 WOD); MCW Metroliner MF150s 156/61/4/5/72 (E538/40/2-4 VKY), 157 (E556 YKW), 159 (E559 AWF), 173 (D521 SKY); Duple Laser 2-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH 410 (B133 PMS, VLT 45, B133 PMS); Alexander P-type Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2Rs 501/4 (A112/5 ESA); ECW-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR 714 (AES 116T, ASA 25T); Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102 806 (BLS 424Y); and Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs 903 (SSA 10X), 921/2 (PSU 372/3, A986/7 FLS).

Stuart, Carluke

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YKJ 798 (R189 SUT) was sold recently and its registration transferred to Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W304 SBC. Plaxton-bodied B10M-60 L713 WGA (USV 803, L713 WGA) had passed to Stend, Glenmavis by February.

Thistle, Dalry

New Saturday service 2 (Dalry, Stoopshill Crescent-Saltcoats via Dalry, Craig Avenue and Ardrossan) is due to start on 11 April.

Thomson, Glasgow

B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15s M123-5/7 KBO were acquired in February ex-Cardiff City Transport 123-5/7 and entered service in allover white.

Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Dart SLF T417 LGP has been repainted into the yellow Airbus Express livery.

Travel Dundee NX

East Lancs-bodied Scania N113CRBs 110/1 (K410/1 MSL) were sold in February.

Wait, Chirnside

Further to the January, the new Optare Solo M920 is registered YJ54 UBY rather than YH54 UBY. Alexander Sprint B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N352 OBC had joined this fleet by February.

Weir, Clydebank

In February, this operator took delivery of a new BMC 1120FE 60-seater school bus finished in allover yellow, for use on a Strathclyde Passenger Transport school contract in the Rutherglen area.

West Coast, Campbeltown

Summer seasonal service 93 (Rothsay, Guildford Square-Mount Stuart House via Craigmore and Ascog) was due to start on 25 March.

Western Isles Council

Duple-bodied DAF SB2305 coaches H224/5 TCP passed to Jones, Walkden and Wren, Carlin How respectively last April, while Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds T433/4 EBD were acquired by TM Travel, Staveley and Simonds, Botesdale respectively by September.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

SF54 JUO is another new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE that had joined this fleet by February.

Wilson, Gourock

The Scottish Travel Greenock-Braehead service was due to be withdrawn on 29 March, ending three months of competition with the Harte Bus Company on that route. Since it started in December, AEC Routemasters, Dennis Lances and new Mercedes-Benz Varios have been purchased for use on the service.

Plaxton Pointer B35F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF P675 RWU had been added to the fleet by February, introducing low-floor operation on the Burns Square service — no doubt in response to the low-floor competition offered on this route by the Harte Bus Company.

Wishart, Frickheim NX

Travel West Midlands Marshall B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D P238 EJW joined this fleet in February. Numbered W310, it is in Travel Wishart white with blue fleetnames livery.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Optare Solera-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L YX54 BJV was on loan from Optare last November.

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GROUP

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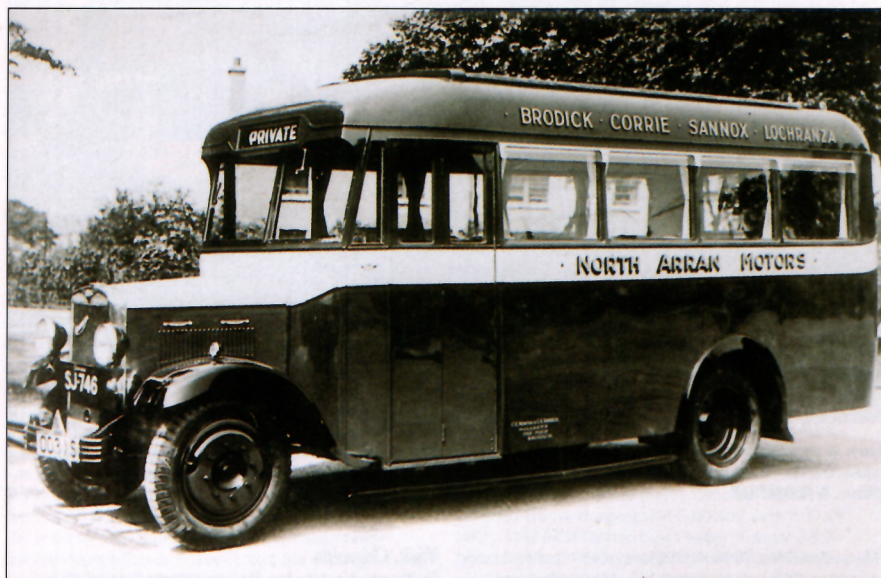
Stagecoach
Group

YT

Traction
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A CENTURY OF SCOTLAND'S OMNIBUSES

No 14: BRODICK



Top left: In the early days of bus operation, several Arran villages had more than one bus operator. In 1933, two Brodick-based operators — Finlay Newton and Ernest Ribbeck — ceased to compete on the route linking Catacol, Lochranza, Sannox, Corrie and Brodick, and formed a joint company called North Arran Motors. Each firm purchased its own vehicles for this venture. Newton took delivery of Stewart-bodied Commer Centaur SJ 746 soon after the new company was formed, its legal lettering declaring E. K. Newton and E. K. Ribbeck to be the managers.

SANDY MACDONALD COLLECTION



Middle left: Competition on the route south from Brodick to Lamlash and Whiting Bay between Gordon Brothers of Lamlash and A. C. Lennox & Sons of Whiting Bay gradually gave way to a degree of co-operation, and Lennox bought the Gordon business when it was sold in 1961. Gordon purchased Duple Vista-bodied Bedford OB SJ 1340 in 1950, but it had passed into Lennox ownership and livery when photographed at Brodick Pier in June 1966. It is currently undergoing restoration at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum. The ferry in the background is the *MV Glen Sannox* of the Caledonian Steam Packet Company on the service from Ardrossan. Also visible is the rear of Ribbeck's Plaxton-bodied Commer Avenger SJ 1298. A swallow emblem was a feature of Ribbeck's fleet, and was also used as a drivers' blazer badge.

IAIN MacGREGOR



Bottom left: Arran Coaches lost the contracts to provide the bus service to Western Scottish (then owned by its former Scottish Bus Group managers) in 1992. Competition returned briefly to the island, with Arran Coaches running a few journeys commercially until selling out to Stagecoach, which acquired Western in 1994. A feature of Stagecoach operations has been the use of a special coach on the seasonal service between Brodick Castle and the pier. A former David MacBrayne Bedford coach and a Burlingham Seagull-bodied Guy Warrior have previously made appearances, but the vehicle used in recent years has been 25728 (WLT 546, TBC 1X), a 1981 Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R finished in traditional black and white Western livery with gold fleetnames.

SANDY MACDONALD



Below: In 1967, the Lennox businesses at Whiting Bay and Brodick merged to form Arran Coaches, the psv trading name of the Arran Transport & Trading Company, which became the sole operator of services from 1973 to 1992. This June 1974 view shows GJS 888, a then 14-year-old Duple Midland-bodied Bedford SB1 new to Mitchell, Stornoway. In the background is Goat Fell, which at 2,868ft is the island's highest mountain.



Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
**G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue,
Belfast, BT6 9RG.**

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
**Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue,
Blackrock, Co Dublin,
or by e-mail to: ntpa@eircom.net.**

MAJOR OPERATORS

Translink

Preferred suppliers have been announced for more than half of the 300 new buses and coaches to be bought by Ulsterbus and Metro (Buses February). There will be 70 Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers, 50 Irizar Intercentury-bodied Scania coaches for Goldliner routes, an as yet unspecified number of Optare Solo (probably SlimLine) midibuses and four Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12 (not clear if they are B12B or B12M) luxury touring coaches. Most are repeat orders, but the Volvos will be the first B12s and the first Plaxton-bodied Volvo touring coaches since 1999. Suppliers have still to be named for around 25 double-deck Goldliner coaches and up to 150 full-size single-deckers.

The full implications of the new Metro system in Belfast have become clearer. As anticipated, Lagan-side ceased to be an operational depot, with seven buses transferred to Metro and all others to Great Victoria Street. Its 16-vehicle Carrickfergus sub-depot has passed to the Newtownabbey district, while the eight-vehicle sub-depots at Comber and Ballygowan transferred to Great Victoria Street control. Two Ulsterbus vehicles at Newtownabbey and five at Great Victoria Street transfer to Metro control, but these depots already were dual Ulsterbus/Citybus facilities. A long-established organisational difference is that the Newtownabbey district manager is responsible for both operations, while the Citybus (now Metro) operation at Great Victoria Street is controlled by the district manager at Falls depot. The Ulsterbus district manager at Great Victoria Street, who already was responsible for the adjacent Europa Buscentre, is also now responsible for Lagan-side Buscentre.

Ulsterbus

Buses transferred to Metro were Scania L94UB/Wright 701/41-4/85 (HCZ 8701, TCZ 1741-4/85), Volvo B10M/Alexander Q-type B65F 1524/5 (DAZ 1524/5), Optare Solo 1872 (SCZ 3872) and Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2807-11/9 (CCZ 8807-11/9).

Delicensed are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 879 (TXI 7879) and accident damaged Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1139 (LXI 1139).

DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount 670 (AAZ 1670) has been sold to Lough Swilly, Bristol RELL6G/Alexander 2591/6 (BXI 2591/6) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 870/4 (TXI 7870/4) to Wealden PSV Sales (dealer), Tonbridge. RELL 2583 (BXI 2583) has passed to the Irish Transport Trust for preservation and was used for an ITT outing during the month.

Metro (formerly Citybus)

The outstanding batch of Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers is numbered 2966-75; 2966-8 were introduced with the launch of Metro schedules on 7 February, 2969-71 a week later. Their registrations are the fourth set issued for this batch of 10 buses. BEZ 9966-75 were reserved in advance, but as they were built a month earlier than expected, the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency amended the allocation to BEZ 6966-75, which appeared on 2966-8. However, as a result of an error (presumably a double issue), this was changed to BEZ 7966-75 and finally to BEZ 8966-75. To be fair to the DVLA, this is probably only the first double issuing error on Ulsterbus/Citybus vehicles since 1971.

Buses transferred from Ulsterbus were Scania L94UB/Wright 701/41-4/85 (HCZ 8701, TCZ 1741-4/85), Volvo B10M/Alexander Q-type B65F 1524/5 (DAZ 1524/5), Optare Solo 1872 (SCZ 3872) and Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2807-11/9 (CCZ 8807-11/9).

The Solo is apparently to replace Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 624 (CAZ 6624) on the special Easybus route system, but this had not taken place as we went to press.

The new schedules have permitted 15 older vehicles to go into reserve at the Duncrue Street premises vacated by the dispersal of the Lagan-side operational fleet. These are all the remaining Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-types, 2611-3/9/20/3-5/7/30/4 (NXI 4611 etc), Tiger/Alexander Q-types 1406/7 (WXI 1406/7) and 2650 (SXI 2650) and Dart/Wright Handybus 626 (CAZ 6626). Besides 624 mentioned above, the only Handybuses still in the Metro fleet are 627/31 (CAZ 6627/31), both of which have roller blinds in place of their original electronic displays.

Also delicensed are N-type Tiger 2626 (NXI 4626) after loan to Ulsterbus at Downpatrick, and Leyland Atlantean/ECW open-topper 2901 (PXI 5501, JYG 417V).

Q-type Tiger 2677 (VXI 2677) has reverted to Citybus red/ivory, having lost its overall Guinness advertisement.

Contrary to the advance publicity about the new Metro system, frequencies on five of the 12 main corridors and six of the 15 other routes are reduced, with increases only on four corridors and one other route. However, the improved regularity in many cases will provide passengers with a better quality of service. The long-standing Centrelink service connecting Central Station and most areas of the business district has been withdrawn following cessation of commercial sponsorship.

The main corridor routes are:

1A/B/D/E (Antrim Road), ex-45, 46, 48/A, 49, 51.
2A/B/D/E/F (Shore Road — 2D/F extend to

Monkstown Estate, formerly Ulsterbus), ex-8, 9, 10, 11, Ulsterbus 155, 160, 161.

3A (Hollywood Road), previously 24.
4A (Upper Newtownards Road, extended to Ballybeen Estate, formerly Ulsterbus)

previously 16, 17, Ulsterbus 8. (Castlereagh Road) previously 30, 31, 32.

5A (Cregagh Road) previously 33, 34.

6A (Ormeau Road) previously 82, 83, 84.

7A/B (Malone Road) previously 69, 70, 71.

8A/B (Lisburn Road) previously 58, 59.

9A/B (Falls Road) ex-13, 14, 15, 535, 537, 538,

Ulsterbus 533.

10A/B/D/F (Shankill Road) previously 39, 63, 73.

11A/B/C (Carrs Glen) previously 35, 36.

12A/B

The corridors with increased frequencies are Hollywood Road, Lisburn Road, Shankill Road and Carrs Glen; those reduced are Shore Road, Upper Newtownards Road, Castlereagh Road, Malone Road and Falls Road.

Dublin Bus

On 11 February while working route 79, Conyngham Road-based Volvo Olympian/Alexander RH-type RV347 (97 D 347) sustained such severe fire damage that it is unlikely to be repaired. The fire was not the result of vandalism. Three surplus Leyland Olympian driver trainers (thought to be RH1, 65 and 85) have been offered for trade sale on the 'e-Tender' website.

Volvo B7TLs AV379/80 — used previously on the Christmas park-&-ride service — have been allocated temporarily to Ringsend to cover while new Wayfarer ticket machines are installed on its own buses.

Following the liberalisation of taxi supply in Dublin city, demand for Nitelink services has declined to such an extent that Monday to Wednesday services are being withdrawn and Thursday night services will stop at 02.00. The remaining services will be subject to further review.

Bus Éireann

BMC 1100FE/B60F (3+2 seating) schoolbus demonstrator BX54 VTX has been inspected at Broadstone. Former Go North East Optare Excels R833-8 NRG have been re-registered 97 D 67773/4/6/8/80/2, but not necessarily in that order; they will be numbered in the series OP1-10.

Recent confirmed withdrawals include GAC City Bus KCS133 (UZG 133) and GAC Rural Buses KS2, 88 and 112 (EZV 2 etc). A surprise arrival at Broadstone recently was Volvo B10M/Plaxton VP112, which sustained collision damage at Cork's Parnell Place bus station just before its

Metro 2970 (BEZ 8970) of the latest batch of Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TLs on Shore Road corridor route 2B. GEORGE BLAIR



planned end-of-lease withdrawal in January 2004. It has been repaired and re-sprayed into dealer white ready for return to the UK.

Cork's DAF SB220/Alexander Setantas AD15/7 remain on temporary allocation to Dundalk, but B12M/Caetano VC312 has now been released from Dundalk to Cork, where it will join similar VC310/1 on front-line service 51 linking three of Ireland's provincial cities (Galway, Limerick and Cork).

Effective from 7 February, certain workings of express services 32/33 (Letterkenny/Derry-Dublin) now serve Dublin Airport.

OTHER OPERATORS

Barton, Maynooth

Four recently received new coaches are Marcopolo-bodied VDL SB4000s 04 KE 8477 and 05 KE 1000, Van Hool Alizée-bodied VDL SB4000 04 KE 4959 and BMC Probus midicoach 04 KE 3000.

DAF SB220LC/Optare Deltas acquired for schools services are 89 KE 5910-5 (PIL 4921, 9285, 7786, 6726, 8381, PIB 2149; F477 BUA, F517 TPA, F332 FWW, F478 BUA, F516/5 TPA). They were new to Apcoa (Parking Express) at Gatwick Airport, then with Pilkington, Accrington. Noone, Maynooth removed their centre doors.

Dualway (McConn), Rathcoole

The new East Lincs Myllennium Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TL, which was exhibited at Coach & Bus 2004 in Dublin, has entered service with registration 05 D 13455. Two similar buses just delivered are an open-top 83-seater and a 77-seat closed topper.

Four of the ex-London United Routemasters will be converted to open top, retaining the first two front side window bays, while the fifth will remain closed top. All five will have powered platform doors removed from the centre exits of ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympians acquired in 2002/03. Open top conversion work is already well advanced on RML2646 and 2729.

Lough Swilly

A surprising choice of secondhand vehicle in view of the long-standing preference for Leylands is former Ulsterbus DAF MB230LB/Plaxton Paramount 3500 C53F 012 (AAZ 1670). Bristol RELL6G 456 (84 DL 2344, BXI 2579) has entered service at Letterkenny, while similar 457/8 are stored at Londonderry pending re-registration.

A new depot has opened at Bonagee, Letterkenny on the same road as the present temporary premises.

Morton, Rathfarnham

This operator's new East Lincs Myllennium-bodied Volvo B7TL closed top has been registered 05 D 8384. This was also exhibited at Coach & Bus 2004.

Shields Coaches, Dublin

Since early-December last, this operator has been running a new licensed weekday service linking Tallaght (Ellensborough) and the IFSC financial centre, with two morning and two evening peak journeys. The routing is via Firhouse, Butterfield Avenue, Rathmines, St Stephen's Green and Nassau Street. Journey duration varies from 60 to 90min.

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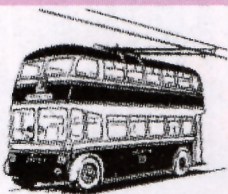
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BUSES focus 34



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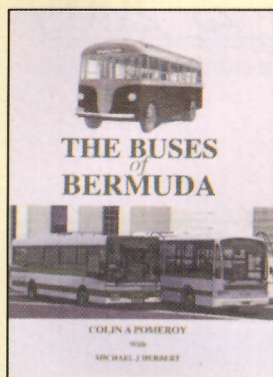
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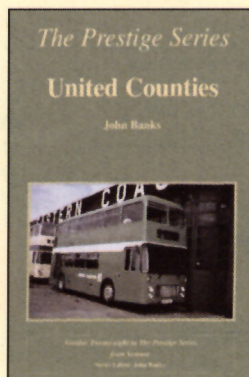
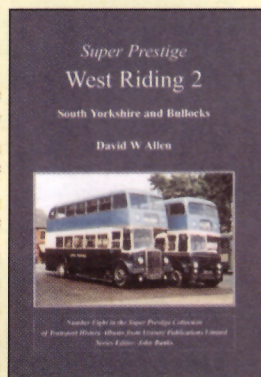
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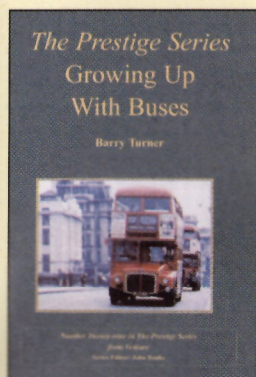
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